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STARBURST



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RIDLEY SCOTT'S **LEGEND**

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THE FUTURE OF CINEMA?

VOYAGE to the BOTTOM of the SEA



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Science-fiction is probably one of the most documented TV genres of them all. It's also one of the most criticised and maligned. It has even on occasion come under fire from SF buffs themselves.

This is often because of a lack of understanding of the nature and traditions of television. Although today's adults are more receptive to changing scientific concepts than their parents, television is still a mass medium for a mass audience. Love it or leave it, a SF theme alone is still not enough to sustain an expensive TV production. Either SF television is taken at its own level and enjoyed for what it is, or the audience goes without.

To understand the nature of SF series, we must first understand the workings of TV itself, its advantages (visual strength, mass communication, continuing characters, episodic format) and its disadvantages (budgetary constraints, network publicity and so on). A television series, like it or not, is first and foremost a profit-making investment. Big budget movies aside, filmed SF can never afford the big names of other productions, although it has been the training ground of today's major stars. Think of Robert Redford (*The Twilight Zone*), and Gene Hackman (*The Invaders*). So TV science fiction is expensive, and it's forced to compromise and meet the restrictions of TV. The distended mutated fingers of *The Invaders* were silly, primarily because no explanation was ever given for their condition. It was a time-worn device, a camera trick to impart instant information, and nothing more than that.

SPIRIT OF SCIENCE FICTION

So we return to that all-important allowance for the spirit in which such adventure series are intended. Suspension of disbelief so that anything goes is one thing, but lack of logic is quite another. Some critics say that problems stem from the fact that TV SF is created by writers unfamiliar with the genre, but often ordinary scriptwriters have a better idea of the potential and constraints of television. Many of the finest classic SF productions, including the famous Fifties cinema features were produced by people completely new to the SF medium, for instance Seigel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

The main difference between the work of Serling, Joe Stefano, Leslie Stevens and so on, compared with those who just copied previous SF was that while they may not have been SF enthusiasts or fans, they had an empathy with the genre, and understood the potential of television for science fiction.

Jon Abbott

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FEEDBACK

BLOOD BOILER BROSNAN

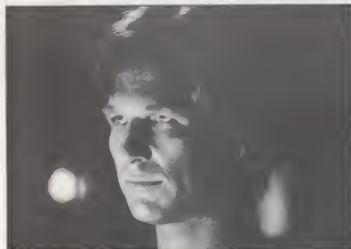
I have just read an article in your magazine which has made my blood boil – and I am sure it will have the same effect on many others too. It was John Brosnan's *It's Only a Movie Column on Starman* (*Starburst* 82).

I find it hard to believe that a magazine like *Starburst* could publish an article by a critic who has obviously made up his mind before seeing the movie that he's not going to like it, and then has proceeded not to watch it properly.

In the third paragraph Brosnan says that the Starman does not have to be from outer space, "he could be from an oppressive mental hospital". That would be changing the substance of the film, leaving us with a story that would be even less original than he claims *Starman* already is.

He also states that Jeff Bridges very good performance is awful. That goes against literally every other critic's view, and the Oscar nominations, and the majority of the viewing public's opinions. His performance is the stuff of magic. Brosnan goes on to say that there is no way that *Voyager 2* could have reached another planet by now. True. But if he was observant he would have noticed that the planet was moving when *Voyager* reached it. He would also have noticed that it was closer to Earth than the Moon and that it is the same as the "flying ball bearing" that collects the Starman at the climax of the film. It was quite obvious to me and no doubt to the majority of viewers that the "planet" was the mother ship.

Brosnan says that the writers could have had *Voyager* intercepted by a space ship. It was! "Why only three days? Can't it wait?" he asks. I don't think that it would be wise for a ship full of aliens to hang around in plain view for more



Top and above: From a strand of hair – the stuff that cinema SF is made of? Karen Allen and Jeff Bridges explore the consequences in *Starman*.

than a few minutes! It could make another visit, but Starman would be dead by then, as he cloned himself from a dead substance. Brosnan doesn't believe that, but I can see the reasoning in it.

Stephen Damarell,
Stanmore,
Middx.

LIVING DEAD

This is another petty quibble to add to John Brosnan's list in *Starburst* 82. According to Mr Brosnan, the only "neat idea" in the whole movie is the creation of Starman from the genetic information contained in a single human hair. But as every student of O level biology knows, hair contains no genetic information as it is not made of cells. Hair is made of keratin, a completely lifeless chain of protein molecules.

Keep searching John, you might find some more unscientific science-fiction. Love the magazine.

James Baxter,
Bishop's Stortford,
Herts.

DEFAMED DOCTOR

Well, well, another series of *Doctor Who* has ended and *Starburst* does its usual hatchet job. What with the recent ravings over sudsy-old *Star Trek*, and the execrable *V*, I am beginning to wonder if this is the same magazine I used to buy so eagerly. Even the *Tri-pods* was welcomed!

Looking at Graham P. Williams' letter (*Starburst* 82) first, I cannot pass comment on William Hartnell's Doctor, since I have only a fleeting familiarity with him. But to say that the series should have stopped on his departure is unbelievable.

Now TV Zone. Richard Holliss' sweeping criticisms had little basis. He knocks the acting in *Attack of the Cybermen* without going into specifics. He complains that the story reminds one that Cyber-



Above: Doctor Who's hula-hoop theory of the universe. Below: "Will that be all madam, or would you care for a manicure before we dock?" A scene from 2001: A Sixties Odyssey.

men are merely actors in silver suits. In fact they are humanoid creatures with cybernetic "improvements" in these suits, as he would have gathered if he had watched the story, with its views of real Cyber-limbs, and so forth.

With one last drop of vitriol, he lays into *Revelation of the Daleks*, which in my humble view was a masterpiece. Does it matter that it took time for the Doctor to integrate into the main goings on? It allowed scope for characterisation, and a steady build-up of tension, and was vaguely reminiscent of the Hartnell years, when his character wasn't allowed to swamp all the others.

Richard Holliss, wake up. There is little that is good in SF today, but that which is shouldn't be treated as a dismal excuse to indulge in some

baseless defamation.

Garry Bradbury,
Ashton-under-Lyne,
Lancashire.

TEN TOO MANY

I must take issue with Richard Holliss over two of his comments in the article on 2010 (*Starburst* 80). First, he says that 2010 "fortunately" is not as "irritatingly thought-provoking" as 2001. 2001 was certainly thought-provoking, but *delightfully* so. This, for me, is part of its magic. It is true that thought-provocation is rare in SF, but that is no reason to complain when it does occur. Second, he declares that "we, as an audience, deserve an answer to Kubrick's grand dream". Again I consider this to be completely the wrong attitude to 2001, as is your labelling of 2010 as the

"long-awaited" sequel (*Starburst* 73).

The notion that we deserve an "answer" is absurd, as absurd as claiming we deserve an "answer" to the Mona Lisa. I see 2001 as a work of art, complete in itself. We may look for, we may find, an "answer" but Kubrick does not owe us one, much less an explanatory sequel-film.

I find it little short of a crime that the perfection of 2001 is being sullied by the insensitive and philistine act of tacking on a sequel. (Yes, I am one that "still" regards 2001 as a masterpiece.) It is doubly regrettable that Clarke himself should initiate the action by writing a follow-up book to supply the "answers" which, it seems, so many people simply could not tolerate life without.

If anybody else had done *Odyssey Two* (the title of his book) we could have ignored it for being a straightforward crass money-spinner, but Clarke's name authenticates it, effectively makes it the "authorised version". He appears to have been infected by the mania for sequels.

It may be claimed that sequels have no effect on the original, which endures as an individual work whatever happens; that *Jaws 2* and 3 cannot diminish *Jaws* for instance. Every sequel, by its very nature, is parasitic of its parent, living off it both thematically and commercially. With most films this is not something to get very worried about; but 2001 is another matter. Once a sequel has said that *this is what was*

going on, that *this is what happened next*, then the potency is dimmed: the undefined becomes the definite, the abstract the concrete; our understanding is disrupted. 2001 will never be the same again because it will be lit by 2010's retrospective glare. Whether or not 2010 is any good on its own merits is immaterial.

I would like to add my voice to that of Andrew Field on the subject of film music (*Letters, Starburst* 80). I would certainly appreciate regular coverage in *Starburst*, and not just reviews but also discussion of the function and effect of music in films.

Nicholas Haysom,
Curdridge,
Southampton.

POLISH AND STYLE

I have noticed a considerable improvement in *Starburst*. Apart from the obvious change in size, the magazine seems to have become more polished and stylish, for instance *The Dream Child* and *Ladyhawke* articles in *Starburst* 81 were beautifully set out as were the *Brazil* and *Death Warmup* features in the previous issue.

But although your coverage of the new releases is very good, you seem to be neglecting the older films. Fans hear the names of obscure films from the thirties, forties and so on, but have no idea what they are about. Maybe you could devote a couple of pages each issue to these films.

Mike Johnston
Annalong,
Co. Down.



ony Crawley's THINGS TO COME

GIGER'S COMEBACK

Best news of the year, so far... H.R. Giger, the father of *Alien*, is back in movies. At last! He's designing certain surprises for *Poltergeist II*, which started shooting in Los Angeles on May 13.



The fact that Brian Gibson, the *Breaking Glass* man, was chosen over ten other Americans to direct, probably has far more to do with Giger's comeback than any dollar-lined persuasion from producer Freddie Fields, the former boss of MGM, and the man who got *2010* rolling. Gibson and Giger worked long and hard some years ago on preparing a chiller film of *The Tourists*—extra-terrestrial criminals encased in a hospital unit.

"We worked well together", the Swiss painter and designer told me. "Carlo Rambaldi was all set to have made the actual cratues. Then, *E.T.* came out and word came down on high that all fantasy projects had to be made for children."

It was because of Hollywood(en) dictums like that, that Hans Rudi Giger tired of the film business. That and the way he felt he was being ripped off. "The telephone rings. The producers, they come to my home. They don't know me. They just know my *Alien* Oscar. OK, we talk. They have good stories. I have all these ideas. Once I start talking, I can't stop. When the work is done, the designs are made, then the film is not made. Or, not with me. But with my ideas! And I never have any money. Having my contract written by my lawyer usually costs me more money than I ever earn."

FREELING GOOD!

There should be more than enough money to look after Giger and his lawyer on *Poltergeist II*. The budget stands at \$20 million—eight million more than the 1982 original, which finished up earning more than \$100 million around the world. Freddie Fields has kept his promise and gathered all the (surviving) members of the Freeling family for another encounter—with the spirits of their swimming pool. Jobeth Williams and Craig T. Nelson are the parents with Heather O'Rourke and Oliver Robbins as the kids. Also back in the cast: Tangina, the midget medium, played by Zeldia Rubinstein. Newcomers will be veteran stage stars Julien Beck and Geraldine Fitzgerald.

As mentioned here before, SPFX wiz Richard Edlund is planning "the most complex SPFX picture ever undertaken." Andrew Lazo is on camera and Quincy Jones will supply the

appropriately thriller-music. The script, which has the Freelings, or young Carol Anne, a the target of more hocus-pocus when excavation begins on the old home beneath their swim pool, comes from Spielberg's original co-writers, Mark Victor and Michael Grais. They're making their debuts as producers this time, as well.

TWILIGHT ZONE RETURNS

It's no longer "the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, between the pit of man's fears and the sunlight of his knowledge..." The new hype says "in a hidden corner of the mind, where reality leaves off and fantasy takes over, lies..." the al-new CBS tv series of *The Twilight Zone*. Rod Serling's lettering has been dropped too, in favour of the Warner Brothers movie logo.

No matter. The Zone is back! Wes Craven has already shot two segments. William Friedkin is due for a third. Other directors are queuing up to have a go at a flock of stories from such authors as Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Arthur C. Clarke and the dean of today's SF writers, Robert Heinlein. First actors at work have included Elliott Gould, Melinda Dillon (Cary Guffey's *Ma* in *Close Encounters*), Robert Klein, Annie Potts and Jeffrey (Amadeus) Jones.



It's the first time for years that CBS has actually produced one of its own drama shows instead of hiring various of the Hollywood combines. The fact the network has brought Simon & Simon creator Phil DeGuere in-house from his own company to produce the series, is another indication of how seriously the network is taking the Zone.

SUSPENSER TRACY?

He backed out of being Superman. But Warren Beatty has finally agreed to become a strip-cartoon hero in the on-off project (since 1977) of Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*. (You know, the detective with the fedora, the square jaw, nose to cut butter with and, of course, the two-way wrist radio). Having gone through several scripts, producers and directors as diverse as Walter Hill and Richard Benjamin since 1977, the film is now being made by the surprising choice of... Martin Scorsese. It's going to be straight stuff, then.

MORE COP ART

Art Linson, the producer who first had the notion of reviving *Tracy* in the movies (QUESTION: Can you name the previous

Tracys?), is settling instead for Elliott Ness. He wants Jack Nicholson to take over Robert Stack's 1959-62 tv role in an *Untouchables* film. Jack-the-lad, meantime, is reviving his Chinatown detective, J.J. Gittes, in *The Two Jakes* opposite Ford's Witness girl Kelly McGillis. And not wanting to be left out of such movies, Dan Aykroyd is writing himself a movie based on Jack Webb's classic slice of tele cop-art, *Dragnet*.

OLD TRACYS

OK, I won't keep you waiting . . . Chap named Ralph Byrd first played Dick Tracy on-screen in four Republic serials in the thirties. Morgan Conway then took over the role for two outings, before Byrd flew back to the coop for four features, the last of which was called (no kiddin'!) *Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome* in 1947.

MOMMA'S BOY

Anything Leonard Nimoy can do, Anthony Perkins can do. That seems to be the Universal thinking behind the *Psycho III* news. Yes, Perkins will be Norman Bates once again. But only because he's won the same kind of Nimoy deal for *Star Trek III* (and *IV*). In short, Perkins will direct. For the first time. Richard Franklin turned down the sequel to his sequel of the Hitchcock classic, in order to direct his own production of *Link* in Scotland.

BRADBURY COMES ALIVE

Ray Bradbury's tales of the fantastic are being adapted by a Toronto TV combine for *The Bradbury Trilogy*. Three stories. Three directors. Three casts. Nick Mancuso stars in *The Crowd*, directed by Ralph Thomas (the Canadian Ralph Thomas, that is, not the British maker of the *Doctor* series); Paul Lynch helmed *Marionettes, Inc.*, with burly James Coco and Leslie Nielsen; and William Fruet secured William Shatner's okay to star in *The Playground*.

MS. FLASH GORDON!

Did you know that Flash Gordon had a daughter . . . ? Or that The Phantom and Mandrake the Magician's buddy, Lothar, had sons? Well, it was news to me, too. But that's the way American television animation goes. The kids join their illustrious parents in an all-new \$15 million King Features series called *Defenders of the Earth*. The animation is done by none other than Marvel Productions.

The 65 half-hour shows have flash, Mandrake and The Phantom continuing the good fight against Ming the Merciless and his vicious accomplices as they try, again to eliminate the human race. These heroes prove rather more popular in Europe and the rest of the world than in America, which is why King Features' president, Bruce Paisner, dreamt up some teenage off-spring. Plus a Spielbergian orphan, Kshin, aged ten, to be befriended by Mandrake.

Flash's daughter is Jemma, 17, blonde and as beautiful as

you'd expect from a girl who had the 'breathtakingly beautiful' Empress of Cereba as her mother. Flash, you'll be doubtless delighted to know, remains as square-jawed and swashbuckling as ever. Jemma Gordon is often more useful, though. She's inherited some of Momma's super-powers.

L.J. is the street-wise, hard-edged, intellectual son of Mandrake's lifetime Jamaican friend and protector, Lothar. Both of them, says Paisner, "know how to get things done." So, of course, does the ever hypnotic Mandrake. Kit Walker is The Phantom's son. A computer and electronic genius, he is due to take up one day the reins and perpetuate the legend of Dad, the enemy of evil . . . "the ghost who walks."

Oh yeah, one other thing. The shows' production team employs 'eminent child psychologists' to advise on content and values. Doesn't that make you feel you!



Beastly. Who's the creature . . . ? Older readers, or young true-buffs will be forgiven for saying the French actor Jean Marais. Youngsters are equally forgiven if suggesting it's an Ewok grandfather. It is, in fact, Klaus Kinski in Roger Vadim's version of *Beauty and the Beast* shot for Shelley Duvall's *Faerie Tale Theatre* tele-films (to be seen soon on Britain's Premiere cable network). Susan Sarandon is the beauty and the cast also features Stephen Elliott from the first *Star Trek* movie and Nicholson's lady, Angelica Huston. Kinski's 'make-up design' is by Sherly Leigh Shulman and Ron Figuly. Looks a direct rip-off of that designed by Jean Cocteau for his 1946 French cinema classic version with Jean Marais.



Opposite page, middle: Melinda Dillon in the new *Twilight Zone*. Above: Spot the difference! Jean Marais and Klaus Kinski as the Beast.



THE PHANTOM



FLASH GORDON

Lonny Crawley's THINGS TO COME

EWOKVISION

Have to get up bright and early to see Lord Lucas' animation shows for American kids. They're launched on 7th September. If you're in the United States at the time, just flick on the ABC network at 9am and you'll find George's two shows linked together under the ponderous umbrella title of Ewoks & Star Wars Droids Adventure Hour.

George could find he has a problem with three animation specials called Robotman & Friends which started airing in April. If these pilots work, some 65 half-hours are to be made at the home of Inspector Gadget. They could work as this show marries those ewoks and droids to come up with... pause for hype... "the world's first soft, cuddly robots". What's more, they have special powers to help people, "especially children".

SF. WRESTLING?

Wrestling – or indeed, Wrestlemania! – is suddenly all the rage in America. Mr. T even goes back into the ring for some \$200-a-seat spectaculars. Liberace turns up and does high kicks with dancing girls. Cyndie Lauper manages a girl rassler named Wendi Richter, hyped as "150 lbs. of 'twisted steel and sex appeal'". And a chap named Hulk Hogan is a veritable superstar. Fine, fine. But what has that to do with us. You'd be surprised... Two guys are shooting a movie in Baltimore called *Blood Circus Wrestling*. Their mat stars include Spyderman, The Mummy, Voodoo and The Crying Blondes. And their story is officially described as being... science fiction!

Of course, over here, snooker's the thing. So, Alan (Scum) Clarke is shooting a London movie called *Billy The Kid and The Green Baize Vampire*. That one has the world snooker champion known as... Dracula.

HENSON'S IN CHARGE

Jim Henson started directing his *Dark Crystal* sequel – well, kind of – on April 15. *Labyrinth* is a co-venture between Jim's combine and Lucasfilm. The script is by Terry Jones and Laura Phillips. And the



Mississippi Muppet master is also planning to give the rest of the world puppeteers a break by starring them in his upcoming TV special, *Jim Henson Presents The World of Puppetry*.

THE OTHER FOX

Tom Fox, the Chicago investment banker turned, allegedly, movie mogul who got George Romero's blood up when

announcing *Return of the Living Dead*, is up to something much worse. A sequel! The first film, which is about as far from Romero as one can get – in terms of professionalism, if nothing else – was written and directed by Dan O'Bannon. It is to be hoped that now that Dan has finally helmed his first movie, he will now get on with something rather more... serious.



Living Dead is a farce on the order of *Porkys Meets Zombies*. The script is often funny – even hilarious – but these *Porkys* rejects just can't handle it. Any sequel, therefore, is bound to be the same kind of cheap crap, warmed over.

ENTER: JOHN NELSON

After the banker, meet the broker... Larry Garrison is a Wall Street broker with mogul dreams. He is, though, going about things in better fashion than Tom Fox. Garrison's first movie is based on John Nelson's SF. book, *Starborn*. Can't say I know the book; can't have been that much of a hit either as Garrison is calling the film, *This Time Around*. He does, though, have Nelson handling the script. A rare move these days...

ANIMATION CITY

The rest of the news from MIP – it stands for *Marche International des Programmes de Television* – concerned animation. In fact, apart from Paramount's big *Space Ark* mini-series, from James A. Michener's weighty book, it seems as if all TV is to be cartoon from here on. And that, in particular, means robots.

The British combine, Three B Ltd., were well to the fore, selling ten features with titles like *Sword of the Space Ark*, *Starbirds*, some 6 half-hours of *Tranzor* and another space shot, *Voltus 5*, already in the works for next year. Hanna-Barbera's Australian end is responsible for another 30 hours of *Challenge of the Gobots* (it looks very Japanese), while the US Headquarters is given over to a marathon effort of some 60 Biblical stories to be animated for cassettes over the next five years.

DISNEY IN COURT

It's sure taken them long enough, but Disney has finally gone to law in Hollywood to stop the Filmmation animation house from making 13 full-length animation classics, seven of which are 'improperly' based on Disney hits like *Snow White*, *Pinochio*, *Bambi*, etc. I first reported on Filmmation's plans last year at Cannes. That's how long it's taken Disney to move... Filmmation should have less hassle with their new tele-series of *She-ra*, *Princess of Power*. Who she? Why the twin sister of *He-Man* and *Masters of the Universe*, of course! The animation family is sure spreading; something to do, no doubt, with all the scripts boasting "pro-social values."

WHOOPS!

Worst animation news of the hour. Despite of (or because of?) his video games, Don Bluth's production company has gone bankrupt. Don's picking up the pieces while working out of Sullivan Studios, in Van Nuys, California.

MADRID'S SIXTH

Tempered as it was by the recent tragic death of its young organiser, Jorge Lluésma, Madrid's sixth film festival was bigger and better than ever. In all, 140 films were screened, opening up the event from its *Imagif* fantasy beginnings. With San Sebastian's event in financial crisis, Madrid looms large as the only major fest to be staged in Spain. Jorge could have no finer tribute. His widow, Rita Sonllea, has agreed to carry on organising next year's festival, but she'll be hard pressed to find a partner as keen and tireless about furthering cinema as her late husband.

In many respects, the competition was a rehash of films unveiled at Cannes last year. The Madrid City prize went, inevitably to Coen lads for *Blood Simple*, which also collected the critics' nod. Although virtually ignored at Cannes, Vincent

Ward's *Vigil*, from New Zealand, was judged Best Film, though the directing honours went to Steve Barron for *Electric Dreams*, which the public voted No. 1 as well. Young French star Sophie Marceau was Best Actress in *L'Amour braque* and the actor's prize went to Yugoslavian Nikol Simic in *Strangler vs Strangler*. Dean Semler's *Razorback* images were selected as the best cinematography, Poland's *Sex Mission* took the scripting trophy, and Repo Man had the best SPFX.

LIGHTS! CAMERA!! & AKK-SHUN!!!

Dr Who, now seen on 146 local TV stations in America, is due for much, much more than just its usual face-lift if, when it comes back on the Beeb. It's going to be greatly modernised... About time, too... Robots (still more of 'em) are at the bottom of John Badham's garden, so to speak, in *Short Circuit*... Elizabeth Montgomery, *Bewitched* for eight tele-years, is filming a drama about a woman awaking after 22 years in a coma. No title yet. John Sayles has adapted three of Grace Paley's wondrous short stories as *Enormous Changes At The Last Minute*. That sounds like the story of every writer's life... *Splash II* is definite, says my spies at Disney... Next from *Quest For Fire* director, Jean-Jacques Annaud, is *The Name of the Rose*; but he's sure taking his own sweet time about it... In June, America's leading SF publishers, DAW Books (named after founder Donald A. Wolheim) had printed its 50 millionth book... Armando Valcauda, the SPFX mate of Italian director Luigi Cozzi (aka. Lewis Coates), is shooting a slice of spaghetti SF called *Pisopalu*... Wargamester Ally Sheedy is filming Ross MacDonald's book, *Blue City*... Right Stuffer Philip Kaufmann should hit the big time with his film of Milan Kundera's brilliant novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. His producer is Saul Zaentz, who usually works only with Milos Forman and collects Oscars (five for *Cuckoo's Nest*, eight for *Amadeus*) in his spare time... David Carradine coming back as Kwai Chang Caine in a two-hour *Kung Fu* tele-flick... Due before Florida cameras in September, a movie called *Gorilla*. ♦

Tina Turner sings for Mel Gibson in *Beyond Thunderdome*, the third *Mad Max* film.



MEET THE STARS FROM DOCTOR WHO IN MYTH MAKERS

NEW

MYTH MAKERS 5

**ELISABETH
SLADEN**



still available



MYTH MAKERS 1
Michael Wisher



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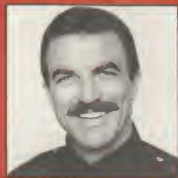
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ON THE RUN

FRANCES LYNN TALKS TO TOM SELLECK



Mention the name Tom Selleck and two things spring to mind—the popular TV series *Magnum P.I.* and how he turned down the part of *Indiana Jones* in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Selleck turned down the part because of prior commitment to *Magnum*, but the decision hasn't hindered his film career. He recently made *Runaway*, his third feature film, in which Selleck stars as a 'nice guy' cop. Selleck has managed to pursue dual careers in film and television since he was first spotted on a panel game by a 20th Century-Fox talent scout. He has starred in two TV movies, *The Shadow Riders* and *Divorce Wars*. During a break from *Magnum* in summer 1982 he filmed *High Road to China* in Yugoslavia, portraying a 1920s aviator adventurer, and the following year he played the title role of a suave jewel thief in *Lassiter*.

Selleck made his notable film debut in *Myra Breckinridge*, after being hand-picked for the part by Mae West. Bit parts followed in such films as *Seven Minutes*, *Countdown* at the Superbowl, *Coma* and *Midway*.



As Sergeant Ramsay in *Runaway*, Selleck plays a cop in charge of stopping defective or 'runaway' robots in a metropolitan city based in the near future,

when machines and complex technology have become a familiar part of everyday life. During a break in his *Magnum* filming schedule in London. ►

► **Why did Michael Crichton choose you for the *Runaway* role?**

I worked with Michael on a picture called *Coma*, in a much smaller part, and Michael claimed he wrote the *Runaway* part for me when he sent me the script. I was very flattered. I liked Michael's writing and I like his work, so for whatever reason he did it, I was very flattered.

What interested you about *Runaway* on first reading?

What interested me about *Runaway* was that it really is not a futuristic picture. It's only set three or four years in the future and the technology used in the picture is almost there today, so it's a picture audiences can relate to. I don't think they have to fantasize, and that was important to me when I read it. The clothes are the same, the cars are the same. The people are the same. The machines and particularly the robots are a little more advanced, but they are not humanoid-type robots. They are just simple little machines that help you around the house.

What was it like to work with the robots (Robot designs by David Durand)?

I find actors are more reliable than machines or animals. But we had a lot of fun with the machines. Michael (Crichton) and John Alonzo (John A. Alonzo, A.S.C. — director of photography) and everyone were so prepared that we did very little of what one can do an awful lot of, like faking standing in front of a black screen or a blue screen and pretending things are there that aren't, and filling them in later. Most of the things really functioned. And as for TV monitors, we weren't looking at a blank screen pretending things were really there in order to read something off it. When we had to read something off it, it really came up and the picture was shot in a real style that way. So from a point of view of an actor, it was great, and a lot of the technical things in the film really did work.

"FOUL LANGUAGE"

The scene when your son (Joey Cramer) tells you off for swearing — was that your idea?

Yes it was. Michael Crichton wrote it. We just talked and we both thought when we read the original draft that *Runaway* really is an action picture. And we wanted to get a little more of the character's family in. It was important. There was this scene which was very appropriate where the character (Ramsay) uses some very strong language, and I felt very strongly that that scene should be in. We wanted at least another scene with the

son so you have some sense of his family relationship. And also I wanted to do something which showed accountability for the language because he used some pretty foul language and it turns out to be on live television. And I loved the way Michael wrote that scene. I couldn't keep a straight face in the scene with the kid in it. I was real happy with that scene and I think it was important for the picture. It sells the relationship with the boy which is very important in the end.

Did you help Gene Simmons (the lead singer in Kiss) in his acting?

I didn't really have to help Gene much. Gene has great instincts and he's very intelligent. Actually I like Gene a lot. We got along very well. There are some basic things about walking on a set and the way the process goes which I think Gene was a little anxious about. So I sat down and told him, because any actor who walks on a new set is going to be apprehensive about things that really won't affect the works. Nobody wants to look like a newcomer. The quicker you make somebody feel comfortable the better. And that is all Gene needed. He's got a great future as an actor. He's bright and he's

Here's our latest model in deluxe robots!
Bottom right: Selleck narrowly avoids getting wired for sound!
Top right: Looking a touch robotic himself. Selleck in *Runaway*.



smart and he's a very good businessman too.

"POPCORN PICTURE"

In *Runaway's* finale why weren't you seen kissing Cynthia Rhodes your co-star? You were only embracing!

It isn't quite a relationship picture. We wrestled with that problem a lot. Michael and I call *Runaway* a real good popcorn picture. You go in, and it doesn't take a lot of work. Hopefully if you enjoy the premise you'll get carried away and get scared a bit and laugh a bit. To really justify more than what happened we would have needed to take sidetracks, and although I'd love to kiss Cynthia (Rhodes) and she's great to work with, it didn't fit the picture. So I think we went as far as we could. This picture takes place over two days. I meet her one day and the picture's over the next. So it's tough to fit anything more in over a weekend so to speak!

Are you scared of heights? Weren't they back projection shots in the lift's end scenes?

We were up there. We mixed an awful lot of techniques, and the technical people we had on the show were just brilliant. And I think it's really a tribute to Michael Crichton and John Alonzo and our set



decorators and the rest of the artists in that area.

Not to mention the special effects!

They're marvellous. I was amazed to see this level of effect.

How?

I can't tell you. I don't believe in showing how stunts are done. Special effects are part of our craft and our art. And we've got only so many tricks because film is only an illusion. I feel when you see all these stunt shows, stunts have to become increasingly more dangerous to fool an audience and that's why I think more

people are getting killed.

Do you do your own stunts?

I do a lot. I feel it's very important to do a couple of things and take the risk.

Do you regret not doing *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*?

Sure! I would have loved to have done *Raiders*, but it was impossible. I had already signed a contract I'd done for a *Magnum* pilot that wasn't sold when I tested for *Raiders*. So when they wanted me, even though *Magnum* hadn't sold, I have a hunch that it kind of helped sell *Magnum*. But it's been easy to be philosophical about it. Things have worked out for me. I've been offered wonderful pictures that I'd never dreamed about. ♦



SEE *Legend* FREE!



Legend, the newest film from innovative director Ridley Scott, goes on general release in the autumn and we're giving 600 *Starburst* readers the chance to attend a special screening.

Scott is famous for such visually striking modern classics as *The Duellists*, *Alien* and *Blade Runner*. His latest film is a richly photographed fantasy-adventure centring on the age-old conflict between the forces of darkness and light. It is told through mythical faeries and unicorns, and less magical mortals.

Legend stars America's newest heart-throb Tom Cruise, and Tim Curry, best known for his transylvanian transvestite in *Rocky Horror*, and introduces 16-year-old Mia Sara.

The technical team on the film includes Alex Thomson (Director of Photography), who worked on *Eureka*, *Excalibur*

and *The Keep*, and Editor Terry Rawlings, who has worked on other films with Scott. *Legend* was written by William Hjortsberg.

For your opportunity to go to the special screening, courtesy of *20th Century Fox* and *Starburst*, cut out the token and send it to the address below, with a self-addressed envelope.

We have 300 pairs of tickets to give away to the first 300 *Starburst* readers who write in. Sorry, the offer is limited to one pair of tickets per reader.

The screening will be on Sunday 1st September 1985 at London's Odeon Haymarket at 11.00 am.

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TOKEN



FILM REVIEWS

CAT'S EYE

"...An unremarkable but passable attempt"

No pussyfooting around, *Cat's Eyes* is an unremarkable but passable attempt at trying to fuse three Stephen King short stories into a humorous suspense thriller. Two of the stories were bought by producer Dino De Laurentiis from Milton Subotsky who optioned them from *Night Shift* years ago, and the third is a King original written with moppet star Drew Barrymore in mind.

Tenuously holding these bits of fluff, from horror fiction's Jackie Collins, together is a tale that almost rivals *The Incredible Journey*: an ordinary pet cat dodges danger, death and starvation between New York, Atlantic City and North Carolina to play a linking part in each episode. "Quitter's Inc." outlines the radical therapy employed by the head of a non-smoking organisation to get addicted clients to stop. Secondly, "The Ledge" concerns a mafioso high-rolling gambler who bets that his wife's lover can't circle his penthouse on a six-inch ledge. And "The General" has a troll-like creature terrorising a little girl by bursting out of the skirting board of her bedroom at night in order to steal her breath.

There's not much to be said about this latest De Laurentiis package really except that it wastes the talents of such star names as James Woods, Candy Clark, Robert Hays and Kenneth McMillan. It may be competently directed by Lewis Teague, but surely something is wrong when the best performance on show is that of the wandering feline?

The problem with *Cat's Eye* is that it falls between two stools in trying to be funny and frightening at the same time. As a result the menace one tries so hard to react to is constantly undercut by the humour and it be-



comes neither one thing nor the other. Endless in-jokes highlighting previous Stephen King movies don't help either!

In painfully avoiding trying not to make the audience have kittens, *Cat's Eye* merely becomes as unentertaining as kitty litter. Erratic as most of the Amicus anthologies were in the past, everyone of them knocks this limp offering into the ground.

Alan Jones

Cert. 15. 94 mins. Starring Drew Barrymore (*Our Girl*), James Woods (*Morrison*), Alan King (*Dr Donatti*), Candy Clark (*Sally Ann*), Kenneth McMillan (*Cressner*), Robert Hays (*Norris*), James Naughton (*Hugh*). Directed by Lewis Teague. Produced by Martha J. Schumacher. Screenplay by Stephen King. Photographed by Jack Cardiff. Music by Alan Silvestri. Creatures created by Carlo Rambaldi.

Stephen King's *Cat's Eye*, with mellow bone jelly, stars cute Drew Barrymore, a furry feline (left) and rugged James Woods (seated - below).



RETURN TO OZ

"A lot of comedy, a little too much chat, but a wonderful climax"

Walt Disney Pictures latest live action film, *Return To Oz*, is described by the company as 'neither a sequel nor a musical'. For most young audiences, however, their only previous encounter with L. Frank Baum's magical land is through the repeated television screenings of the MGM classic *The Wizard of Oz*, starring Judy Garland. Yet it would be grossly unfair to try and compare the two films, especially when the original is such an integral part of the Hollywood legend. In fact, I think most younger audiences will be able to identify more easily with the Dorothy of *Return To Oz*, then with Judy Garland's rather mature, but excellent portrayal.

Little Fairuza Balk who plays Dorothy in this new \$25 million production is charming, intelligent and, more importantly, very believable. Which is gratifying, because in this story, it is the adults who are thoroughly despicable. In the new film we join Dorothy as she travels back to Oz, accompanied by a talkative chicken called Billina. She finds the Yellow Brick Road in ruins and so sets off to find her friends, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion. En route to restore the Emerald City's former glory from the clutches of the evil Nome King, she is assisted by a wonderful kettle-shaped robot called Tik Tok, a moose head called Gump and a skinny pumpkin-head named Jack.

Together they overthrow the evil villainess, Mombi, with her multiple

heads, the dreaded Wheelers, and eventually confront the Nome King himself. Jean Marsh and Nicol Williamson play the evil duo. Both star in the film's prologue, a suitably threatening Dorothy. When she reaches the land of Oz, they reappear, even more hideous than before. But they aren't the only menace to Dorothy and her friends. The special effects people, Lyle Conway and Will Vinton, throw a lot of rock monsters in the path of our heroes, brought stunningly to life by a technique called *Claymotion*.

Certainly Disney's claim that *Re-*

turn To Oz is a great departure from the Baum we have grown up with, is very apparent in their handling of the story. There are genuine moments of terror that are worthy of the Disney animated classics of old. (*Snow White* received an A certificate when it first opened in Britain.) However there is a lot of comedy, a little too much chat, but a wonderful climax. The outdoor sequences have all been filmed on location and are very exciting. Certain parts of the film reflect the latest methods in movie storytelling, understandable when one considers that Gary Kurtz is executive

producer and Walter Murch director. Coupled with the tremendous effects (which will please the most discerning of fantasy film buffs), *Return To Oz* is spectacular entertainment and should not be missed.

Richard Holliss

Starring Fairuza Balk (*Dorothy*), Nicol Williamson (*The Nome King*), Jean Marsh (*Mombi*), Piper Laurie (*Aunt Em*), Matt Clark (*Uncle Henry*). Directed by Walter Murch. Produced by Paul Maslansky. Screenplay by Walter Murch and Gill Dennis. Based on stories by L. Frank Baum.



LEONARDO DA VINCI

"A fine animated film"

John Halas' latest film in his *Great Masters* series is about Leonardo Da Vinci. Lasting almost an hour, it portrays a subject matter dear to the producer's heart. For Da Vinci diversified throughout his long career, trying his hand at architecture, portrait painting, engineering, flying machines and sophisticated weaponry, and all with the

aid of his paintbrush. It's generally believed that if he were alive today, he would be a devoted practitioner of animation, and it is therefore appropriate that John Halas used various styles of animation in order to bring the Da Vinci story to the screen.

In a relatively short period, his studio have used computer graphics, still drawings and full cel animation to great effect. In fact the film's only pitfall lies in what it doesn't show us of the artist's life. For example, when Da Vinci wanted to keep the plans of say, a flying machine, secret, he would write them down in reverse. In order that he might read it himself, he would then place a mirror beside the

written page. Although the Halas film begins with Da Vinci's signature back to front, the narrator fails to explain why this was the case. The narration also hints at other marvellous Da Vinci ideas, but changes back before we have a chance to understand them.

Another unnecessary element is the addition of an introduction starring Sam Wanamaker. This makes little sense beyond the intention of selling the series to the Americans.

But it's the animation that counts, and although the reproductions of Da Vinci's work are a little disappointing (costs prevented them filming the actual artwork), John Halas and his associates have produced a fine ani-

mated film. Let's hope the others in the series (Hieronymus Bosch could be next) are just as enjoyable, and the *Great Masters* is purchased for a wider audience in the very near future.

Richard Holliss

Produced and Directed by John Halas. Storyboard and Design by John Halas, Text by Anthony Freemantle, Illustrated by Janos Kass, Animation by Gary Powell, Computer Animation by Martin Poole, Edited by Shaun Lenihan, Voices by Robin Ellis and Maurice Denham, Music by Boris Karmichev, Production Assistant Pat Webb.

NIGHT OF THE COMET

"up-beat, funky, rare treat"

Night of the Comet is that rare treat – a low budget post-apocalyptic fable that doesn't take itself too seriously and therefore makes its satiric barbs all the more pointed. Hard to believe that the same director, Thom Eberhardt, served up one of last year's prime turkeys, *Sole Survivor*.

Here he's in firm control of his own script and the result is a constant delight. Full of scares, a gleeful unease, humour, fun cheap special effects and a touching warmth, *Night of the Comet* is a true original and a welcome addition to the quirky, pop-edged, indefinable SF genre in the tradition of *Repo Man*.

The tongue-in-cheek opening narration perfectly sets the tone for the film. We are informed that the greatest meteorological event of the last 65 million years is about to happen at some unspecified Christmas time. The most fabulous comet of all time is heading towards Earth and the world's excited star-gazers are gathering at street parties and organised celebrations in anticipation of a dazzling pyrotechnic fireworks display. Ominously, the last time the comet was seen seemed to coincide with the extinction of dinosaurs. What does it hold in store this orbit? Disintegration of the entire living population, that's what. And those who aren't so lucky get slowly mutated into flesh-eating zombies. As *Night of the Comet* works on never ending twists and surprises, it would be unfair to give anything more away.

Suffice it to say that the casting is pretty out of this world too. As the two tough Valley Girl survivors, Catherine Mary Stewart from *The Last Starfighter* and Kelli Maroney are perfect wise-cracking foils for the post-holocaust hazards that crop up in the guise of marauding punks and American Werewolf in London-type nightmares within nightmares. Geoffrey Lewis and Mary Woronov are suitably sinister governmental agents who aren't as benevolent as they first appear. Woronov has a very affecting death scene which is one of the highlights of the film's gentler moments. *Eating Raoul's* Robert Beltran is very beguiling as the only man left in the world whose sexual persuasion is considered suspect in the

light of the enormous responsibility he is faced with – to perpetuate the human race.

Confound your expectations with this up-beat, funky and ultimately uplifting movie. True, it offers only a sanitised version of one possible future, and Eberhardt lazily lets the pace slacken at times. But as a metaphor for maturity, it can't be faulted. *Night of the Comet* has cult stamped over every frame. See it.

Alan Jones

Starring Catherine Mary Stewart (Regine), Kelli Maroney (Samantha), Robert Beltran (Hector), Geoffrey Lewis (Carter), Mary Woronov (Audrey). Written and directed by Thom Eberhardt. Produced by Wayne Crawford and Andrew Lane.

HOWLING II

"Shortchanges in every area"

Even if *The Howling* hadn't preceded it, this trashy sequel would have been considered sub-par by anyone's standards. With the sub-title *Your Sister is a Werewolf*, right from the first frame the film maker's unease is transparently evident. How do they live up to a modern classic both in horror/make-up terms and with the same vein of campy humour? The answer is they don't. *Howling II* shortchanges every punter apart from devotees of Sybil Danning's bust-line. The end credits

feature a lame rock video concept which endlessly intercuts Ms. Danning ripping off her costume in time to the tacky theme song.

Howling II wastes the talent of both Christopher Lee and Jamie Lee Curtis look-a-like Annie McEnroe, who



travels to Transylvania to put a stop to with queen Danning's plan to revive her werewolf cult with black magic rituals. Conversely the film doesn't waste anything belonging to Reb Brown or Marsha Hunt as they are both awful. Brown plays the lacklustre "hero" and Hunt a favoured member of Danning's inner circle who arrives at a Transylvanian station looking like she's about to make a guest appearance on *Dynasty*!

Featuring ludicrous non-stop orgies, King's Road bondage outfits, Halloween jokes, gross gore and lousy zip-up wolf suits, *Howling II* is a mess. More seriously it plays ridiculously fast and loose with basic werewolf lore and mixes up its myths outrageously. The "Children of the Night" in this film are immune to silver bullets, so a stake made of Titanium is the only way of killing them. Holy water is tossed around in vials like grenades. And garlic in the ears is a werewolf preventative. Even the number 666 gets thrown in seemingly to add a bit of arbitrary instant menace that is all too sadly lacking throughout this pathetic effort.

Most of the blame for this disaster has to lie at the feet of Phillippe Mora due to his bland and lifeless direction. But then again it could be the fault of everybody else involved in this dubious package. Who cares? I suppose *Howling II* could be called the perfect popcorn movie. That's if you buy some and throw it at the screen!

Alan Jones

Starring Christopher Lee (Stefan), Marsha Hunt (Marina), Reb Brown (Ben), Anne McEnroe (Jenny), Jud Omen (Vlad). Directed by Phillippe Mora. Produced by Steven Lane. Screenplay by Robert Sarno and Gary Brander (from Branders novel).



Top right: "Alright, who stole my lines?" Sybil Danning in *Howling II*. Above: "Which way to the holocaust, punk?" "Don't ask me, I've just dropped my torch," replies the candlewax zombie in *Night of the Comet*.



Elvis Costello's "Accidents Will Happen"

In late May, the Everyman cinema held an exclusive, week-long Music Video Festival. As part of the proceedings a panel, made up of members from the music and pop promo industry, was arranged to discuss the status and fate of the pop video. The mood of the discussion ranged from enthusiasm at the medium's creative potential, to resignation over its predominant promotional use. James Olsen survived an attack of video strain to bring back this report.

the music screen



Michael Jackson's "Thriller"

Pop Videos — emerging artform or attractive advertising? So commenced the discussion and, as it turned out, one of the liveliest events at the Music Video Festival. The hundred plus music videos on show marked one of the most comprehensive collections assembled for the brief cinematic season; made possible because they were put together for last year's Venice Film Festival. The videos were grouped together in six different categories, based on visual rather than musical styles.

The six groups covered (in brief) were: **Video as a Genre** (from Billy Joel's "Allentown" to Peter Gabriel's "Shock the Monkey"); **Animation** (from Pink Floyd's "The Wall" to Elvis Costello's "Accidents Will Happen"); **Storytelling** (from Spandau Ballet's "Communication" to ABC's "Poison Arrow"); **Special Effects** (from Talking Heads' "Burning Down the House" to David Bowie's "Ashes to Ashes"); **Movie Clips to Videos** (from Police's "Invisible Sun" to Devo's "It's a Beautiful World") and **From Cinema to Videos**, with directors like Ridley Scott ("Avalon"), Francis Coppola ("All Night Long") and, of course, John Landis ("Thriller").

As would be expected, the videos ranged in quality from the superb to the dire, thankfully leaning slightly in the direction of the former. Yet taking into account the five-year span covered by the selection, what the festival *did* reveal was the progression (some would say regression) of the medium. Historically, pop videos were taken up by the record industry as a promotional gambit to rescue them from the hard times they were beginning to experience in the mid-recession, late-seventies. What with the sharp decline in record sales and the increase in home entertainment via video recorders, the industry needed a way to counter the slump. Pop videos provided an exciting new format, and television, on the hunt for cheap programming, provided the venue. This promotional use has accelerated to such an extent that virtually every artist now needs a promo, be it for broadcast television, video juke boxes, or pre-recorded cassettes and compact laser discs. In the US it has reached the stage where airtime on the all-day pop music cable channel MTV is regarded as a pre-requisite for any artist's success.

I think the closest I'll get to viewing MTV in this country is either by stringing together all the *Max Headroom Shows* in one long six to seven hour run, or attending the Music Video Festival. What becomes evident in such intensive viewing sessions is a formula format. And, in the case of the *Max Headroom Show* and the Music Video Festival,

the programming of four- to five-year-old pop videos, shows that styles have looked inward rather than outward for their inspiration. In some cases the clichéd styles and techniques are so obvious that the promos become self-parodies of the medium's versatility. The panel seemed to concur on some of the most common clichés, including the split screen, intense close ups, stock footage, superimposition and repetition of images. Even the praxis of 150 to 200 edits per 3-minute promo (deemed necessary to hold an audience's attention) has become something of a golden rule.

On the panel, Annabel Jankel (co-creator, with Rocky Morton, of *Max Headroom*) takes up the point: "I think there's certainly less narrative videos being made four to five years ago, because that was when pop videos were really beginning to take off, and everybody felt that this was a great opportunity to make a three-minute film. This approach then became the fashion. What ultimately happened was that a lot of directors ran out of money halfway through shooting the narrative, so they quickly shot some 'form' and kept cutting back to it throughout the video. This became the formula."

John Scarlett-Davis, another promo director on the panel, agrees: "Some of the videos produced back then could have been called an artform, showing off the possibilities of the medium, but the standard has dropped considerably. In those days it was really up to the individual artists to produce their own video. Nowadays everybody is trying to get a finger in the pie... record companies really have the final say, and the video makers themselves end up with no control over the final product."

Five or so years ago, record companies really had very little interest in pop videos. Now that has all changed in the light of their enormous potential as a marketing tool. "The spirit of experimentation," adds Jankel, "seems to have fallen away in favour of pop videos being used to showcase the bands themselves."

What about some of the excellent animation Jankel and Morton produced, they certainly didn't feature bands? "Well they were made a very long time ago," says Morton, "and it's very difficult to get that sort of material through now. The record companies have done their market research, and their gaze is firmly fixed on broadcast TV, especially in the US. And as a result pop videos are looking more and more American in style."

Can we really talk about an American pop style or sensibility, as distinct from a British one? Andy Lipman, the discussion's chairman is quite definite in his views: "...the

British pop videos, such as those by Madness and The Boomtown Rats, exhibit a more sceptical, down-to-earth attitude... [with a] kind of cheap, recession atmosphere. Although, there are increasingly more directors working on US styled pop videos, ie. fame, all singing, all dancing, quite over the top." His distinctions are reinforced by Charlie Nelson, who runs Commercial Music (a company that produces music tracks for TV commercials). "US audiences are more accepting, more susceptible to crude delusions," quipped Nelson, "while I think British videos are more sophisticated, but not always in a positive sense, because our approach loses out a lot."

Bruno de Florence, another promo director on the panel, adopts a more analytical stance: "American films influence a lot of filmmaking styles, and there's been a similar effect on pop videos. In the old US musicals there are small segments which could be seen as promos in themselves. But skilled people, such as the musicians and dancers, were involved. The problem I find with pop videos is what if the musicians are poorly skilled? What do you relate to if they can't perform, or the music is poor? Music is a system of signs without any specific content, so you can put any content you want into it. As a director I try to create a set of symbols from the lyrics."

"Does that mean that the video makers are stealing people's imaginations?" An almost unanimous, if slightly wary, "yes" greeted Andy Lipman's question. "Do the visuals then assume more significance than the music?" Annabel Jankel thinks not, "I don't feel you could ever say that the image maker is more important than the music which is so evocative. You need some form of integration for the end result to be truly successful." Rocky Morton agrees, but takes the implication one step further: "I think the artists themselves should be more involved in the production. I mean, they came up with the concept. They wrote the words. They wrote the music... the artists really should have a greater say in what goes into the videos."

Still, most of the creative decisions are largely influenced by the record companies, who put up the money for the promos, although Charlie Nelson sees a way around the dilemma of creative control. "Has it ever occurred to anyone", quizzes Nelson, "that if the promo industry in this country was to present itself in a more organised fashion to the record companies, offering a more structured, approach to the companies' marketing needs, the pop video makers would then be given more autonomy. I mean, presenting a whole package to the record

companies, taking on the market research to create the product they want, rather than have [the companies] step in at every stage and mess everything up."

Mind you, the music industry, which spent £12 million last year on pop promos alone, would have to really be won over by any independent package deals, before they deviated from the successful norm. Additionally, the record companies are heavily geared towards broadcast TV, which requires higher production standards than many of the smaller independents can afford.

What about these smaller independents? Do all video makers have their sights set on broadcast TV? Apparently not, as evidenced by the strong feelings voiced by members of the audience, who felt that the title of the festival should have been pop promos, and not music videos. Their objection stemmed from the fact that there was still a lot of exciting, low budget music videos being made, using innovative and inexpensive techniques. Not being attached to the corporate apron strings of the record companies allows them more creative freedom. Consequently, it was restrictive to talk about the potential of music videos only in terms of pop promos.

Annabel Jankel takes a broader view. "It really is very similar to the way the film industry has gone. The lower budget end of the feature film market is far more interesting in terms of creativity and experimentation. The big budget stuff is, more often than not, terribly bland, but it is more acceptable to the basic commercial cinema."

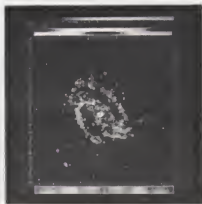
The production of low budget videos can cost anywhere from £1,000 to £3,000; the mid-range falls between £5,000 and £10,000; and the mega budget, US variety, anywhere up to £35,000. "Broadcast standard videos can be done for around £7,000," explains John Scarlett-Davis, "but that's the very bottom line. Just the equipment necessary for broadcast, quality is approximately ten times as costly, first hand, as the low band stuff. It's similar to the relationship between 8 and 16mm film."

And despite the rumours that the cost of broadcast quality equipment is decreasing substantially, to come within reach of a lot more people, Annabel Jankel feels that the technology has already been available to anyone to make videos and/or films. "I mean it really doesn't cost that much," insists Jankel. "I think the main point is to make it. Whether it's one inch high band, or 8mm, or 35mm is irrelevant. If you think you've the talent to get your ideas on video or film, then you should do that... [that's] more important than getting access to broadcast quality equipment." ♦

space opera



In July, a new record titled *Rigel 9*, by writer Ursula Le Guin and composer David Bedford, will be released by Charisma Records. Arranged in prose and music, the space opera marks a departure of format for the acclaimed SF writer, and for Bedford an opportunity to combine two of his chief passions — music and science fiction. *Rigel 9* tells the story of three human explorers on a distant planet, and of their contact and inability to communicate with the alien culture they find there. Ruth Gould spoke to Ursula Le Guin in California, and James Olsen caught up with David Bedford in London to discuss their unique trans-Atlantic collaboration.



Ursula Le Guin

i n t e r

Starburst: I would be interested to know something about your collaboration with David Bedford in producing *Rigel 9*.

Ursula Le Guin: I wrote a libretto several years ago. And I knew David because he wrote a lovely piece based on one of my short stories. That is to say, there was no singing or performing in it. He simply took the idea and wrote the music that might go with the short story. And I liked that music very much. So when I had this sort of space opera, a libretto for a short piece – for a one act opera which I thought should be recorded or for the radio – I sent it to him. He liked it, and he's had it for some years, waiting for time and money to write the music.

You have mostly written books up to now. Why did you decide to change your format, to become involved with music? I've always written poetry, actually. I first published poetry before I published fiction, and poetry and lyrics and librettos all slide into each other pretty easily. Also, I love radio, I love the media. I've been doing script writing lately and so on. It's a lot of fun getting out of one's backyard – which is fiction in my case – and sort of entering into a few other backyards. And writers, fiction writers, don't normally collaborate, they work alone. This gives me a chance to work with other artists, such as David.

Did you think about breaking through to new audiences. People who might buy records but who might not read books in quite the same way?

Well, I suppose so. Yes, I hadn't really thought of it like that, but of course that would be true. There are people who are completely radio or record orientated.

Listening to *Rigel 9*, I found that it seems to work on many different levels. There's a physical search of the planet going on, but there is also perhaps a more spiritual search at the same time. Would you agree with that?

Yes, I think David's music, of course, has made it more complex, as music always does. You know, I never know exactly what I'm writing about, but certainly loneliness is at the heart of it – the difficulty any person has in communicating, in talking with other people. The fact that we're all aliens to one another in some sense. I suppose that's one of the things I was saying.

One of the things that I felt came across was an implicit criticism of the civilisation we live in as being very noisy, one which doesn't listen to others very much, and that we're all like that.

Yes. I suppose the fact that the men had got

there by this immense technological effort, and had come into what is apparently a kind of technology, because there is a city of sorts. But most of them can't actually see it, it's literally invisible to them. And only this one fellow who is more open and more unhappy with his civilisation can see it.

I was never quite sure, in fact, whether the alien culture was real or not, or whether it was just a projection of Anders' own yearnings and desires.

Oh, I don't mind it remaining ambiguous. . . of course, there's always a certain amount of doubt. Did he or did he not really see what he said he saw? The mystic may always be doubted, yet, I hope it *does* remain ambiguous.

Why can't Anders communicate with the aliens? Is it because he's assuming they're going to be like him and communicate in his way? Or is it because he doesn't listen enough?

I don't know. It's a perfectly fair question. This is the kind of thing where the writer sometimes doesn't know quite why it is this way, it simply is. What you said, that "he doesn't listen quite enough" . . . he does come in with expectations, and needs and desires. He doesn't wait and listen and open himself up, so what he is hearing is merely what they echo back. Possibly, given time and space he might have heard more, I don't know.

So you feel there are answers to be found.

It's not a question of people speaking in the dark and only getting echoes back? Well, he's doing that to a certain extent, because that's all his society has ever taught him to do, as a man particularly. He's been taught to speak, and that's it . . . mostly to the echoes. How the aliens communicate, apparently, is in song. But that is not clear, it is deliberately made unclear, because Anders is our viewpoint, as it were.

The other theme that comes across again strongly, as in so many of your works, is that of our attitude to other cultures, and of our inability to understand them and see them as having anything to offer.

Yes, this is certainly something that from the beginning seems to be one of the things I write about. And, of course, its endlessly useful and fruitful in science fiction. It is one of the great science fiction themes, one of the themes that science fiction has brought to literature in general, I think – the various ways of exploring or talking about the alien. What makes alienness, and who is alien to whom, and so on. It's a lovely way to turn the world on its head. As anthropologists have been doing for centuries now.

Following on from that, I find in a lot of your works, as well as a genuine respect for other cultures, almost a yearning for other ways of being and for other values. Yes. I feel we live in an immensely successful and immensely dominating culture, the most dominating culture that has ever been on earth. We meet other people and other ways of being, and we simply trample them under. Including, not only other human ways, but the animals and the plants and everything else. And I for one, am fed up with it. I think we have gone too far in a bad direction. And so, of course, I have a kind of homesickness for almost any other way of being in the world. And I think a lot of people do. It's part of the appeal of science fiction. I don't think

it's fair to call it escapism. That's a put down. We are looking for alternative ways of being.

Do you feel this specifically as a member of one of the rich, dominating countries on earth?

Oh yes, of course. It's not easy being an American at the moment. Unless you go along with everything our President in the Pentagon wants to do. The amount of bad conscience, of guilt and fear in this country is very strong. And, of course, it's a very hopeful sign. The fact that we are actually able to be afraid of what we're doing and feel guilt about it, I think, is the only hope for us.

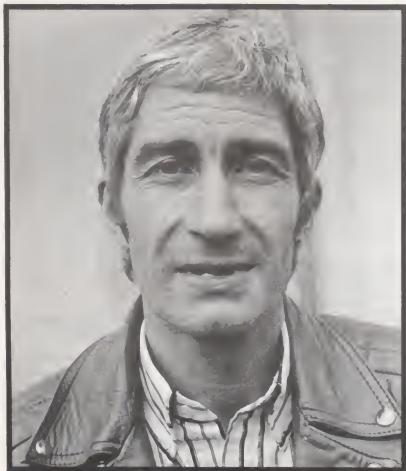
Much of your work, in fact, makes us question our assumptions. You obviously see this as being very important.

That's the delight of science fiction or of speculative fiction. It has this capacity for turning things upside down, for making you see the back of your own head. So for somebody who wants to shake up prejudices or cultural suppositions, or for a feminist, as I am, it's a wonderful medium. You can sort of propose alternatives and thereby shake up peoples' assumptions.

Finally, you mentioned earlier that you have a new book due out in September, which is fully illustrated, and is again accompanied by music. Is this a science fiction work?

I don't really know what it is. The publishers are calling it an "event". I don't know what you'd call this kind of a book. I have invented a people, but I haven't invented a place. The place is definitely in Northern California. It's my own home country. The book is called "Always coming home". It's a very difficult book to describe. I don't know that anything quite like this has been done before, which makes it very hard to talk about.

space opera



David Bedford

Prior to working on Rigel 9 (which took about two years off and on), David Bedford's credits included orchestral arrangements for Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells, arrangements for Roy Harper, Graham Parker, Madness, Elvis Costello, and most recently he was involved once again with Oldfield on the soundtrack for The Killing Fields.

About eight years ago, David Bedford composed a piece of music to, as he describes it, illustrate the ideas behind one of Ursula Le Guin's short stories, the Hugo award-winning "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas". In seeking permission from Le Guin's US publishers to use the title of her story, Bedford learnt that she was in England, and after meeting her, came away with another project, this time to score an unpublished libretto called *Rigel 9*. "She described the piece as being an 'opera for the ear'," and since 1976 he has been trying to interest record companies in the work, until Charisma Records decided to give him the go-ahead last year.

The storyline and characterisation were firmly established by Le Guin at the outset, but Bedford felt that some aspects couldn't be easily accommodated by the operatic format. "Her feeling was that everybody should sing all the time, but there were sections which would have sounded quite odd if converted to an opera. So I selected sections where she had used slightly more poetic language, which I asked her if I could turn into songs. This left the rest of the story, the more prosaic, chit chat bits, to be spoken as dialogue".

"Her guidelines were pretty detailed", continued Bedford, "and there are parts of the opera where she describes what's supposed to happen in the music. But some things did need changing, for example, she'd used slang from the sixties, which would no longer be suitable, so these were taken out, or altered".

Bedford's approach admirably captures the two very different cultures portrayed by Le Guin; the humans represented not only by their obvious speech, but by the harsh synthesised tones accompanying the scenes in which they appear, confronting the enigmatic aliens, with



their almost mystical choral singing. And while much of the dialogue sounds like a radio version of a *Star Trek* episode, dramatising the popular SF theme of 'first contact' (Le Guin's deeper humanist concerns coupled with Bedford's pervasive melodies have quite a lyrical effect. "What I tried to do", insists Bedford, "was to place the music in the background, whilst people were talking, such that the music would either foreshadow something, coming up, or echo something that's just happened... it's not a musical in the Hollywood sense, because there the music is not continuous, and the dialogue forms the greater part of the film. In *Rigel 7* the music weaves through everything, except for the start where I wanted to establish they were on an alien planet, and the situation and the characters had to be clearly introduced.

The choral representation of the aliens, continues Bedford, "also fitted in with other things I've done in

the past. Ursula felt that the alien voices should be sexless, shouldn't sound like opera singers, that there should be no vibrato, and that they should be female. The obvious solution to that is to use young singers, who haven't been trained to do this horrible wobbling that opera singers do. So we formed a girls choir from local schools."

The final result is a very pure sound indeed, much of which Bedford puts down to mixing at the studio, where he and Jeff Young, the engineer, utilised a computer for some of the more complex melding of musical styles.

Although Bedford professes no real preference for any of the tracks, he is very satisfied with how the funeral scene turned out. He explains, "What happened with the funeral scene was that I had the choir sing the opening as soloists, and then took it to Tony Stratton-Smith at Charisma for an outside opinion. He felt that the funeral

singers should sound stronger. And just at that time I'd done some arrangements with the female duo Strawberry Switchblade, and I thought their voices were incredible. This was before they'd had any record released. So I had them sing the funeral section."

While the voices for the choir are in keeping with Ursula Le Guin's quite specific brief, the inclusion of Strawberry Switchblade proved a stroke of good fortune, as was the choice of the other singers and actors. "It was all a bit rushed," confesses Bedford. "I'd written the music and realised I hadn't yet found the voices for the main roles. Jeff Young knew Gerard Kenny personally and persuaded him to become involved. Charisma knew Enn Reitel, the actor, and I knew the other actor, Lorin Stewart. So they all fell into it at the last minute. In theory you should audition hundreds of people, but often you get quite good results by accident."

Black Moon Rising



Alan Jones talks to Linda Hamilton

Midnight. I sit nervously nursing a drink at a West Hollywood gay bar waiting for my date to turn up. The place is Greg's Blue Dot, situated at Melrose and Highland, and this hi-tech nightclub is one of the many Los Angeles locations being used for New World Pictures latest interpretation of a John Carpenter script.

Black Moon Rising is in the *Blue Thunder* genre of speculative fiction rather than straight up SF. *Battletruck* director harley Cokliss explains it this way: "It's a hard-edged thriller set in *Metropolis* or *Alphaville* with a *Blade runner* atmosphere".

The 'Black Moon' of the title is a super sleek futuristic automobile which can travel up to 350 mph on a hydrogen fuel

Alan Jones recently caught up with the first lady of fantasy, Linda Hamilton, on the set of her new film Black Moon Rising. Here she talks about her career in films, including her recent movie The Terminator, and the trials and delights of her latest cool and fearless role. . .

distilled from tap water. Based on a Porsche 914 design, this ultimate car is not a "Knight Rider" clone, but the primary con-

cern of a government 'professional thief' named Quint, played by Tommy Lee Jones. He has hidden a computer memory disc containing the tax records of a suspect corporation in the *Black Moon*, during a dangerous chance encounter with some sadistic henchmen. But the car is stolen by Robert Vaughan's massive and ruthless covert organisation, whose elaborate underground assembly line processes and rebuilds the grand theft autos for important European 'clients'. Quint has to infiltrate this ostensibly impenetrable fortress to reclaim this vital evidence before the car gets customised out of all recognition. In what sounds like a promising climax, the *Black Moon* is forced to leap between two downtown LA skyscrapers.

The film also stars Keenan Wynn, Richard Jaeckel, Dan Shor, Lee Ving and one actress in particular – the reason why

I'm hanging around this chilly location in the first place. She is Linda Hamilton—the thinking man's Sybil Danning. In *Black Moon Rising* she plays the strikingly beautiful Nina, a master car thief whose uneasy relationship with Quint forms the main crux of the plot. Linda first caught our attention in Nick Castle's *TAG: The Assassination Game* and again in Stephen King's *Children of the Corn* when she played Vicky Baxter, the girl captured and nearly crucified by young religious zealots. But it was her role as Sarah Connor, *The Terminator's* mother of the future, that captured our hearts. Personally I don't often enjoy talking to actors or actresses as they make such obvious and clichéd statements, but Linda Hamilton is refreshingly different. She has definite views on the horror genre, what her part in *The Terminator* meant to her, and where her career is going in the future.

After *The Terminator*, I thought Hollywood moguls would have been beating



"In terms of street recognition, The Terminator has done a lot for my visibility, but in terms of the parts I've been offered, it hasn't made the slightest difference."

her door down to offer her meatier roles, but as Linda explains, this wasn't the case at all. "In terms of street recognition, *The Terminator* has done a lot for my visibility, but in terms of the parts I've been offered, it hasn't made the slightest difference. I should qualify that by adding not quite yet. The industry didn't really take the film very seriously, although when it runs on cable television I expect that to change. I still get offered a lot of horror movies of course but I feel that with *The Terminator* I've done the ultimate and such is the lateral thinking of Hollywood, that you tend to get offered the same role over and over again".

This means if the much talked about sequel to *The Terminator* ever gets made, Linda will think very carefully before doing it, as she explains.

"If the team were the same as the first film it would make my decision much easier, (James Cameron is presently working on *Alien II*) so I've got time to consider all the pros and cons. It would really rest on how good the story is, as I can't see the point of doing something just for the sake of it. You run a great risk doing a sequel, so my part would have to have the potential to be every bit as good as the first. Cameron's hand really showed in that film, and in the hands of another director I'm not sure I would trust a similar razor's edge. When I read the script to *The Terminator* I thought, 'Oh it's another one of those', and did so without much enthusiasm. I mean I have played that kind of heavy drama before—being a victim but a survivor. That is where James enters the picture because he had such a strong conviction and vision about the film that it

became something special. The film has a magic quality about it. I rarely meet anyone who hasn't responded to it in the way James wanted. In all honesty even I was surprised how well the film turned out. The only argument I have with James is that he needs to work with actors a little more, but by the same token you can only applaud the way he enhanced Schwarzenegger's performance".

If Linda was pleased with the way *The Terminator* turned out, the complete opposite is the case with *Children of the Corn*. "I don't talk about that film", she says. "Okay, it wasn't that bad for what it was. I shouldn't really apologise for it, because I always give every movie my best. I chose *Children of the Corn* over other 'lits an' ass' roles as I didn't want to be a sophomoric comedy with nil mentality behind it. I'll do a horror movie over that type of movie any day, as I feel those 'pop the cherry' movies have really taken women a step back. I thought *Children of the Corn* had the potential to be a reason-

The 'mean mobile' of *Black Moon Rising*
Above: Linda Hamilton tests the water for *Black Moon* co-star Tommy Lee Jones.



able addition to the genre. I was wrong. Nothing beats a good scare in my book – well, there is something else of course – but *Children of the Corn* wasn't even good escapist fun, it was simply mediocre. It had nothing to do with getting me cast in *The Terminator* that's for sure!"

Black Moon Rising happened very fast according to Linda. "I got the role four days before principal shooting began", she says.

"It's the best role in the movie as far as I'm concerned – but then I would say that, wouldn't I? I'm as hard as nails in this and original as hell and I get the chance to go from villainess to heroine. It is very hard to find a woman's role for somebody of my age (28), as I usually play much younger parts. The real joy of *Black Moon Rising* is that I'm not having to cut myself emotionally in half to play a teenager. It's a great opportunity for me to be strong and sophisticated as I've done to death being vulnerable. I'm still trying to find my footing in this film really. Because it happened fast, I'm constantly being accosted by about ten people at once and expected to process all the information they are giving me while I'm still trying to conceptualise the barely formed ideas I have about my character. But the film industry demands that kind of instant grasp or you'll never do

"I chose *Children of the Corn* over other 'tits an' ass' roles as I didn't want to be in a sophomoric comedy with nii mentality. . ."

your job properly at such short notice. Even if I'm on the verge of panic, I always appear much calmer than I really am. I'm blessed with a certain control and for this part that quality is working in my favour. Nina is very cool, precise and fearless. She'd toss her life away in a second for a new thrill, so I keep muttering 'fearless' to myself and recycling that thought all the time which leaves no room for anything else".

Linda has definite thoughts on her co-star, Tommy Lee Jones, and director Harley Cokliss too. "Tommy and I are a bit distant it's true, but that is a workable choice. In the movie these characters are not best friends, they are cut from the same cloth. It does take a while before you develop any kind of relationship with someone and we are admittedly pretty isolated at this moment. What didn't help either was our very first scene together. It was a disaster of scheduling as we had to make love. Can you imagine how unfair it was – 'Hi, I'm Tommy. Let's jump into bed together'. Harley of course is in the middle of all this but he has given me good advice, although it is taking quite a time to establish a rapport with him. He is full of insight, and my performance will be good because of that. He is always reminding me that I have a job to do in spite of the



Robert Vaughn in *Black Moon Rising*.
Below: A tense moment

tension I'm feeling when I don't think I've given my level best. I'm an extreme perfectionist and it is very easy for me to get lost in something that I felt wasn't right, rather than just move on. Harley has certainly proved himself to me."

Linda is happily married to actor Bruce Abbott who she met while making *TAG*. He played the psychopathic killer. Her formal acting training was with Lee Strasberg in New York, and she did a graduate NYU course under the auspices of Nicholas Ray. You may have seen her on television in various *Movies of the Week* such as *Mother and Daughter* with Katharine Ross, *Country Gold*, *Hill Street*

Blues and the cancelled soap-opera *Secrets of Midland Heights*. In fact Linda could have been in a top-rated soap right now, but it was a route she refused to take. "I choose to stay away from television as much as possible", she says. "If you care about acting it is a very unsatisfactory medium. I don't act because I want to be a celebrity. Being on TV gives you a certain power, sure, but I want to have more value than just being a household name. I find network mentality insulting. I recently did a show where I played a Soviet spy. The producers were more concerned with tight-fitting clothes and cleavage than an authentic Russian ac-





cent. Trying to explain to them the difference between a spy and an LA glamour girl was a waste of time. That's why I do a lot of work where I don't look good. In fact, I'm always getting trashed in my movies!"

Linda feels she always over-invests in her parts as she explains, "I couldn't do anything but cry for months after I finished *The Terminator*. The role carried over into my private life in a way that got quite dangerous as all the stress and tension I went through became very real to me. What didn't help was having a special effects man who was less than sane. His face was half pink and yellow where he had set his face alight at some point in his

body bag, it would start me off. That is why I'm glad I'm doing *Black Moon Rising*, as I have a neurotic phobia about cars because my father died in a crash. As I'm constantly driving around in the movie and doing as much of the stunt work as they will allow, there is no room for that phobia here."

For the actress who gets more fan mail from Europe that she does from anywhere else, her career path is clear. "I want to lighten up", she says. "You can only play so many rape victims. What I really want to do is get more creative control over the projects I'm involved in. If I have to produce to get more time and money to do

a role perfectly, then so be it. There is a

"I don't act because I want to be a celebrity."

shortage of good directors at the moment and I don't want to arrive at a juncture in my career where I can't count on them or trust them. The more you work for people who don't know as much as you about what you do, the less inclined you are to trust. I don't want to arrive at a place where my acting is joyless. This life matters to me and I have a purpose. I'm a strong woman and I want to see that reflected in my acting career." ♦

"Such is the lateral thinking in Hollywood, that you tend to get offered the same role over and over again."

career. If anybody offered me a light for a cigarette, I panicked that my hair would go up in flames! Working nights for ten weeks means that your defenses get worn down in an unprecedented fashion. There is no way you can react to such a larger than life story without really feeling you are fighting for your life, and that the future of all mankind is in your hands. Okay, you emote to the director whose waving his hands around pretending to be the Terminator robot, but if you are as responsive as I am, it is terribly difficult not to get involved. Death is a very big thing with me. So many friends of mine have died, and if I saw an actor being zipped up into a



The career of Irwin Allen began with B-movies in the fifties (*The Greatest Story Ever Told*, *The Lost World*). It will no doubt end with the bigger budget B-movies of the kind he has produced during the seventies (*The Poseidon Adventure*, *The Towering Inferno*, *When Time Ran Out*, and the notoriously silly *The Swarm*) with their parades of fading stars in search of a plot or a decent line of dialogue. But to students of the small screen he will be remembered for the considerable part he has played in the realm of fantasy and science-fiction in the sixties. His TV series of that period remain a perfect example of showmanship and craftsmanship, and how to make a TV show look good with only the flimsiest of scripts as the backbone.

Allen's first TV series was *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea*, based on his film of the same name, in which Walter Pidgeon, fondly remembered by SF buffs for his role as Doctor Morbius in the superior and influential 1956 film *Forbidden Planet*, played Admiral Harriman Nelson, called out of retirement to take charge of the fantastic, futuristic super-submarine, the Seaview. His co-stars were Michael Ansara, Robert Sterling, Barbara Eden, Peter Lorre, Joan Fontaine, and Frankie Avalon.

For the TV series, Pidgeon's role was taken by the excellent and under-rated actor Richard Basehart. Basehart, after a successful stage career including Shakespeare, made his film debut in the 1947 suspense thriller *Repeat Performance*. He went on to give several fine performances in film and TV, although very few of them gave him full opportunity to display his talents. He is, perhaps unfairly, best known for his contribution to this popular but unchallenging series. On the

In the past film magazines have often been rather too quick to dismiss television as a sort of bastard offspring of cinema. Here we try to right the balance with a series of articles by Jon Abbott on the evolution of American science-fiction. With an enthusiastic eye he will be covering TV series from Lost In Space to The Invaders, and will look in detail at the origins and developments of every American show from the sixties, seventies and eighties. The features will take in related areas such as fantasy comedy and animated cartoons.

In his first article Jon Abbott takes a look at the popular Irwin Allen oldie Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea.

few occasions he was given the chance to stretch himself, such as the episode "The Haunted Submarine", he did the best he could with the material, while the remainder of the time he quietly gave a credible and capable performance.

Basehart's co-star in the series was David Hedison (formerly Al Hedison) who played Captain Lee Crane. He was a wooden actor perfectly suited to the undemanding role he played. He had previously appeared in similar roles in more conventional adventure material, as well as

the classic fifties SF horror film *The Fly*, and Allen's 1961 adaption of Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*. This was a typical venture that would itself have made a likely Allen TV series and in fact provided several reels of convenient stock footage for dinosaur-infested episodes of *Voyage*, especially since Hedison appeared in both! Rather than indulging in Harryhausen-style stop-motion, Allen simply placed real reptilian uglies in miniaturised settings, and let the lizards plough through it, a cheap but convincing ploy that worked remarkably well.

SPIES, SABOTEURS AND SPECTACLE

Allen's career shows a notable loyalty to his actors; the same faces repeatedly turn up in his shows in guest-star roles, as do the stars of former (and later) Allen series. Basehart, for example, later appeared in two Allen pilots, *The Time Travellers* in 1976, and *City Beneath The Sea* (a.k.a. *24 Hours To Doomsday*) in 1970. While both June Lockhart of *Lost In Space* and James Darren of *Time Tunnel* (both Allen series) were cast after appearing in guest spots in *Voyage*.

Most of the episodes in *Voyage* were at first fairly straightforward action and adventure stories, concerning spies, saboteurs, and espionage, but as the series wore on, and the scriptwriters rapidly found themselves running low on ideas, the series slipped further and further still into the enjoyable absurdity that was to become Allen's trademark, as the Seaview encountered werewolves, planet-monsters, robots, silver-suited space aliens, ghosts, time travellers, 16th Century pirates, and even killer dolls and leprechauns. Hedison confronted all these

VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA



Above: Admiral Nelson (Richard Basehart) and Captain Crane (David Hedison) poised for undersea adventure. Below: *The Big Squeeze*: A giant octopus – a frequent foe – embraces the Seaview.

menaces with grim resolve and poker-faced determination, but it was Basehart's cautious disbelief and careful delivery of otherwise lifeless and absurd dialogue that gave the more outrageous episodes whatever credibility they possessed. His sense of authority and bemusement gave the show a dignity and strength of conviction it would otherwise never have enjoyed.

Of all the Allen series, *Voyage* had the most uncharismatic cast, and was free of the gimmicky additions of his other shows. It was the lack of racial stereotypes, concessions to contemporary fashion, and

prima donna behaviour that was most probably the key to the series' longevity, strength, and success.

Voyage did not have any of the thoughtful philosophy or moral dilemmas of the heavier SF material of the preceding years, such as *Twilight Zone* or *Outer Limits*, but it was not intended to. More often than not, its "politics", if that's not too strong a word to associate with a series that intended to be nothing more than a good, solid adventure show, were of the particularly naive and conservative nature that permeated fifties and early sixties TV SF and adventure

series. This simplistic view of "world peace", with "us" (America and its allies) as guardians of all that's good and true, was particularly prevalent in the first season of *Voyage*, when many of the Seaview's earliest adversaries were working for "a foreign power" ("The Mist Of Silence", "The Price Of Doom", "The Magnus Beam", "No Way Out", "Long Live The King", "Hail To The Chief", "The Exile", and many others that followed). A cautious alliance was formed between the super-powers when the entire world was under threat, such as in the episode "Hot Line". The nature of the series setting and the period in which it was produced made this sort of thing inevitable, but many other episodes featured alternative adversaries, such as extra-terrestrials, hostile undersea races, mad scientists, and other lone individuals and dangerous obsessives (usually left unguarded to roam the sub, even when their potential threat was known). Such illogical behaviour was not unusual. Discovering that one of their number is an imposter and a murderer sent to kill everyone else off on an otherwise deserted Seaview (in "The Death Ship"), everybody immediately sets off to roam the corridors and quarters of the vessel alone!

PHENOMENAL POPULARITY

Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea ran for four years, from 1964 to 1968, and was set in the late 1970s. What was then the future is now the recent past, but the series avoided problems with dated styles and fashions as the year was rarely referred to, and the majority of the episodes took place undersea with military uniformed personnel. This has proved advantageous to Allen for syndication purposes owing to the



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Abslom Daak and
The SPACE THIEVES
Every Month, 50p.**



EAGLE award winner 1983

It's 1985, and the legend has come full circle.

► show's phenomenal popularity, since incongruities rarely arise.

Voyage replaced *The Outer Limits* in the American TV schedules when it originally appeared, and was in turn replaced by *Land Of The Giants*, another Allen series. Not every U.S. TV series that comes to an end is cancelled by the networks, and *Voyage*, like *M.A.S.H.*, *Quincy*, and *The Rockford Files* in recent years, simply came to an end because it was generally agreed the show had run its course.

The series co-starred Robert Dowdell as Lt. Chip Morton, Crane's right hand man, and Terry Becker as Chief Sharkey, who, with his constantly distraught and puzzled expression and short temper was the closest the series ever came to comic relief. Poor old Sharkey never quite knew what was going on, but he knew he didn't like it! Becker joined the series from the second season. Previously the show had co-starred Henry Kulky as Chief 'Curly' Jones. Del Monroe, Paul Trinka, Arch Whiting, Mark Slade, and Allan Hunt appeared regularly as crew members. There was a noticeable lack of women on board the 'Seaview', except in occasional guest-star roles, and consequently a commendable lack of the sort of goopy romantic sub-plots that scuttled or slowed down so many episodes of *Star Trek* and others. Interestingly, this made the show a favourite with the lads and the lasses. But then the lack of logic in matters of the heart rarely sits well with the

considerable suspension of disbelief that science-fiction demands. The series also managed to get through three ship's doctors (Richard Bull, Wright King, and Wayne Heffley) which isn't surprising, considering the bizarre nature of some of the crewmen's ailments in the more outrageous episodes. Cuts, bruises, and burns were more often outnumbered by outbreaks of psychopathic behaviour, lycanthropy, and transformations into fossilmen or alien creatures! Quite often the crewmen were literally not themselves!

During its run, the series successfully married the tension and suspense of the submarine adventure movie with the conventional material of the standard 1950s creature-feature, with its eerie or ear-piercing crescendos of music (often borrowed from Fox SF films), very American-sounding alien beings, and malevolent shambling monsters.

The first, more conventional and mundane season was filmed in black and white in 1964, but the following year, with the series a proven success, subsequent episodes were filmed in colour, which gave the writers greater scope. Altogether, 110 episodes were filmed before Allen voluntarily terminated the series in 1968, providing *Land Of The Giants* as its replacement. Needless to say, in those many episodes, there had been some repetition within the limited setting of a submarine. At one point in the series, the scriptwriters suddenly hit

upon the idea of having the crew elude their various adversaries by climbing through the ship's ventilation system, and one episode after another would employ this easy cop-out. In other episodes, interminable treks through the Seaview's interior chasing androids, secret agents, or abominable snowmen, as the crew cautiously edged their way round the confines of the ship's corridors, were relieved only by Allen's frequent and periodic firework displays as the ship and crew rocked from side to side while the instrument panels fused and blew up around them. "Irwin loved a good lurch scene!" former child actor Billy Mumy once told an interviewer, commenting on his time in *Lost In Space*!

GOOD PRODUCTION VALUES

Nevertheless, most episodes told a good yarn, and Allen's production values were amongst the highest on television. Allen's series were constantly winning awards for their production, sets, and effects, and *Voyage* had the benefit of expensive sets, props, models, and equipment from the higher-budget feature film. Despite the sheer silliness of some of the scripts he handed out to his actors, Allen was insistent on important minor details, such as his directive that all aliens and monsters should have mouth and eyes clearly visible

for the sake of credibility and an authentic appearance. Allen even remodelled the Seaview mid-series to include a large transparent viewing port at the front of the sub for the sighting of undersea creatures. Allen was adamant that his shows looked good, and they always did. Other new sets were also constructed for the series, including an island set, complete with beach, water, and jungle, and in the second season episode "And Five Of Us Are Left", Allen introduced the impressive golden saucer-like Flying Sub for the first time, and this later turned up, model and interior set, in his *City Beneath The Sea* pilot after considerable use in *Voyage*. Many of the control panels from the Seaview and Jupiter Two of *Lost In Space* were frequently employed in other Allen series, and many of Allen's outfits and monster suits did double time on other series too. *Lost In Space* aliens often turned up aboard the Seaview and vice versa, and whenever the time-travellers in *Time Tunnel* tumbled into the future, or an oversized scientist turned up in *Land Of The Giants*, it all looked suspiciously familiar! Inevitably, all this gave Allen's productions a distinctive, instantly recognisable look.

As the first season was not filmed in colour, the earliest episodes are rarely seen, in fact unseen in the U.K. since their initial broadcast in the early to mid-sixties. This is unfortunate as they included some intriguing ideas and interesting guest stars. A number of familiar television bad guys appeared, including smoothie Lloyd Bechner in "The Fear Makers", Michael Ansara in "Hot Line", Malachi Throne as a Middle-East baddie in "The Magnus Beam", Michael Constantine as the inventor of a renegade robot in "The Indestructible Man", and George Sanders as a double-agent in "The Traitor." Edward Asner appeared in "The Exile" as a brutish foreign dictator far removed from his amiable and liberal Lou Grant persona, and Leslie Nielsen, from the film *Forbidden Planet* and a host of TV roles in just about every series ever made, appeared as an incompetent commander trying to cover up an error that killed his men in "The Creature." Warren Stevens (also of *Forbidden Planet*) and Skip Homeier made their first of a number of appearances in Allen productions in "The Saboteur" and "The Amphibians" respectively, while Robert Duvall made the first of two appearances in Allen productions as an alien being in the episode "The Invaders".

SERIES OUT OF ORDER

The episodes currently doing the rounds in various ITV regions are from the colour years, mostly the second and third seasons, and they're also being shown out of order, although, with the exception of three sequels, this doesn't matter at all.

Since *Voyage*, Richard Basehart has been seen only in guest appearances, some



"Okay, so where are we?" Walter Pidgeon uses the problem as Admiral Nelson in the 1961 feature film, which set the "End of the World" scenario that would haunt the subsequent series.

of them worthy of his talents (*Columbo*, the *Twilight Zone*-ish TV movie *Sole Survivor*, the MTM pilot *Critical List*). He also had a supporting role in the strangely titled and short-lived 1978 series *W.E.B.* that lasted only five episodes and never came to British TV screens. Most recently, he has played the creator of super-car KITT in the *Knight Rider* pilot, and handled the opening and closing narration for the first season. He died in late 1984, ironically the very same month as Walter Pidgeon, the first Admiral Nelson.

David Hedison spent some time in England following the demise of *Voyage*, where he made a monkey of himself in several British one-off dramas for ITV before returning to the States. Since then, he's appeared mostly in guest star roles in such turkeys as *Charlie's Angels* and *Matt Houston*, usually playing the part of a smooth villain, and in TV movies, including the fantasy *The Cat Creature* in 1973 and *The Power Within*, a failed pilot, in 1979. Of

the others aboard the Seaview, nothing much has been heard, although Del Monroe, who played crewman Kowalski, does occasionally turn up in bit parts, usually as a heavy in such series as *Cannon*, *The Fall Guy*, and *The Rockford Files*, and Robert Dowdell has apparently returned to behind-the-camera organisation.

Here's a corny old line, but in this case it might pay off. If your local ITV station isn't showing *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea* at the moment, write in and ask for it. Be realistic, be brief, and be polite. Remember, they might call themselves a TV "service", but they're not obliged to do anything for you other than fill the airtime. On the other hand, they can't give you what you want unless they know, and *Voyage* just happens to be one of those series that they have easy access to at the moment, and they might as well be killing time with Admiral Nelson and crew as anything else... They could do much worse.

VIDEO VIEW

Reviews by Barry Forshaw

If I sometimes seem to wax over-enthusiastic about films that deal with "literacy" or "adult" science fiction, it's just that I feel I've got to applaud movie-makers who attempt something more than "Cowboys 'n' Indians in Spaca". Not that there isn't room for undemanding space-opera – and I'm as committed a *Star Wars* enthusiast as most – but the more intelligent product is the rarity. And the films – such as 2001 – that tackle more serious concepts than just teeth-rattling laser battles are often dismissed as "pretentious" by genre fans (who often simultaneously complain about the brainlessness of most SF movies).

So, if something like Stewart Raffill's *The Philadelphia Experiment* (Thorn EMI) turns up, I'm willing to overlook flaws for a film that tries to deal with the paradoxes of time travel (and its effect on the characters) without an over-reliance on special effects. The plot, supposedly based on a true incident (which, like me, you may choose to doubt) concerns a 1943 experiment to make a warship radar-invisible. The catastrophic result involves a time-warped catapuls two young sailors into the present, in which a new experiment is creating an Armageddon that only one of the seamen (Michael Pare) can prevent – by re-entering the fatal time-warped.

Raffill, whose entertaining *Ice Pirates* boded well for further forays into that genre, organises his material with real skill. Particularly good is the "culture shock" experienced by

his young heroes in the alien present. The performers, particularly the reliable Nancy Allen, do well – although I find Michael Pare a shade too modern for a forties seaman. The special effects, when they do occur, are admirable.

In the same package from Thorn EMI, Cirio H. Santiago's *Final Mission* is a *First Blood* clone that balances well choreographed action sequences with indifferent acting.

UNSEEN CRAVEN

Precision Video again merit our applause by discovering another off-the-beaten-track item – and one I wish I'd seen when I wrote my recent Wes Craven article for this magazine. *Invitation To Hell* was missing from what I thought at the time was the most complete survey of the director's work. It's certainly of interest to Craven enthusiasts as a carefully built nightmare of alienation.

This has to be one of those reviews where one pussyfoots around the plot details (I loathe reviewers who disclose plot revelations without adequate warning), but I can tell you that Robert Urich and Joanna Cassidy play new arrivals in a high tech community, which boasts an exclusive country club called "Steaming Springs". Entry to this is urged on the reluctant Urich by both his wife and his ambitious colleague (Joe Regabuto). The club turns out to be the source of a malignantly evil power – and if I tell you that the plot owes something to *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*, that's not giving too much away (Kevin McCarthy actually has the line "I hope you'll soon be... one of us!"). As this is a TV movie,

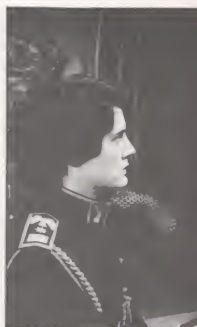
Craven's assured use of visceral shock is inevitably held in check. But his perennial theme – the destruction of the American family – is given its full head. Had the final sequence been more vigorous, there might have been less of a sense of anticlimax – but American TV censorship seems at times as strict as that of Islamic countries.

Next month: A Precision Video Overview.

GETTING STONED

CBS/FOX are justifiably proud of their issue of Bob Zemickis' *Romancing the Stone*, the rattling adventure epic about which you've read enthusiastic notices in these pages. Certainly Zemickis knows how to put together an action sequence – the finale in particular is splendidly staged. Although I did find myself wondering how writer-heroine, Kathleen Turner – whose most strenuous exercise had presumably been pounding typewriter keys – was able to restrain the villain's knife-hand for quite so long.

The elements of humour are equally well judged – Michael Douglas' stubby adventurer negotiates a nice line in self-mockery, and the film wisely allows a lengthy opening sequence in New York, in which we get to know the heroine's chaotic life-style before being plunged into



an adventure more hair-raising than any of her novels. That anyone could find this introduction overlong – as some have – sadly demonstrates the popularity of strings of set pieces which happen to under-developed characters – ie, the Moore as opposed to Connery Bonds. The impact of the video is, as usual, less striking than the cinema version, but the excitement largely survives intact.



Top: Thorn EMI's *Dune* release. Above: *The Philadelphia Experiment* warps into the present via the Thorn EMI video zone.



Also from CBS/Fox and worthy of your attention: *Trial By Terror*, directed by Hildy Brooks, is a taut thriller with a topical theme that has well-judged performances by Kay Lenz and Martin Landau. There are rather too many loose ends, but that's justified by the deliberately enigmatic terror experienced by the married couple in the film.

ARNOLD'S BACK

Richard Fleischer's *Conan The Destroyer* has appeared on the RCA label, and the blood 'n' thunder comic strip elements are allowed full and exhilarating sway, without the philosophical overlay of Milius's original movie. I have to admit that both are too much like work for my liking. But I'm happy that Fleischer has utilised the action-film skills he's had under his belt since *The Vikings* to make this depiction of Robert E. Howard's Cimmerian sun fun. There are two disappointments – Rambaldi's monster, and the restrictive nature of the TV screen (this movie suffers as much as *Romancing The Stone*). Also from RCA: Richard Brooks' bizarre thriller, *The Man With The Deadly Lens*, with Sean Connery.

AMPHIBIAN ATROCITIES

Warner Bros. have issued Barbara Peeters' *Monster* (A.K.A. *Humanoids From The Deep*), a winner from the Corman stable. Basically a retread of Arnold's *Creature From The Black Lagoon*, Peeters' lively movie adds more monsters, more sex and more gore (severely abbreviated in the video version).

Although Rob Bottin's well-detailed monster suits are seen

rather too often for credibility, Peeters has a sharp sense of rhythm in her suspense cutting, and the small fishing community terrorised by the gill men is well detailed in "Bodega Bay" fashion. The characters are rather one-dimensional, although Doug McClure adds an extra dimension with his newly acquired girth (he's obviously joined the Roger Moore/Oliver Reed Society of "solid leading men"). But James Horner's edgy score powerfully underlines the shocks.

Also from Warners: the art of costume design reaches baroque heights in *Hearts And Armour*. In fact, Giacomo Battiatto's *Excalibur*-style is a dizzy example of the sword-wielding sub-genre, with more (unconscious?) humour in the absurd armour worn by its protagonists than the screenplay.

However, Battiatto's lively eye for movement within the frame, and visual delights of a dawn-lit assembly of tents, make the film very watchable. It's a shame that his influences from Boorman include not only *Excalibur*'s splendidly laborious battles, but also that director's wilful avoidance of character in his sub-Malory dramatis personae. Here, only a demented knight given to bouts of lust catches the attention amidst the uniformly Aryan principals.

THREE FROM POLYGRAM

A quick look at three recent Polygram titles – Cabell Deschanel's *The Escape*

Artist is a visually powerful curiosity, another movie (like *Eraserhead* and *The Fourth Man*) which defies categorising. The plot concerns the young son of a famous Houdini-like escapologist and this Coppola production is worth your attention. *Best Revenge* (director: John Trent) is a *Midnight Express*-style thriller, and Lee Philips' *The Stranger Within* (scripted by Richard Matheson) is a routine reworking of a familiar theme – not *Rosemary's Baby* as you might initially think, but more Wyndham's *Midwich Cuckoos/Village Of The Damned*.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING

The latest blockbuster out is *Dune* (Thorn EMI) – but more people may be pleased by Walter Hill's *Streets Of Fire*, and *Repo Man*, both from CIC (who also have Richard Franklin's *Coak And Dagger*, *It Came From Hollywood* and *The Trouble With Harry*). Warners has Tobe Hooper's *Salem's Lot* and *Legend Of The Seven Golden Vampires*.

A projected release from RCA is Brian De Palma's much anticipated *Body Double*. Not yet a notification, more of an early promise: CBS/FOX will be issuing Larry Cohen's *The Stuff* later this year.

From Virgin Video comes 1984. You can see if you agree with director Michael Radford that the Eurythmics soundtrack has ruined his film. Entertainment In Video has the promising *Trancers*, from the Charles Band stable.

BRIEF NOTICES

Polygram have reissued one of the most magical of all fantasy movies, Michael Powell's classic *The Thief Of Baghdad*. Special effects technology may have moved on, but few allowances are required. Of Miklos Rozsa's famous score, one of the finest ever written for the cinema, *Time Out* recently said "The music is intrusive ... so this is one to be watched with the sound off." Maybe it should have been dubbed with a new score ... Wham perhaps?

What went wrong with *The Keep* (CIC)? In Alan Jones' *Starburst* interview with the director, Michael Mann claimed that the film would "scare (us) ... badly." But this turned out to be as optimistic as the amount of coverage we gave to *Krull* – before anyone saw it. *The Keep* is visually stylish, bristling with good actors (including Ian McEwan), but lacks atmosphere, suspense, horror and a halfway convincing demonic monster.

Anybody remember an excellent and tight-knit thriller called *The Outfit* with Robert Duval? The director was John Flynn – and since that stunning exercise in violent action, I've been looking out for further films by him. Well, Rank Video have now issued his *Rolling Thunder*, scripted by Paul Schrader (whose *Taxi Driver* screenplay is appropriately mentioned on the cover). This is another winner – a powerful study of a Vietnam Vet (William Devane – excellent as ever) exploding in bloody vengeance against the thugs who murdered his family then forced his hand into a waste disposal unit.

For some years I've been trying to track down the video of Inoshiro Honda's *The Mysterians* (Kingston) – I was beginning to think it was "phantom" video, like Franju's *Eyes Without A Face/Les Yeux Sans Visage* (notified in the trades twice but never appearing). Well, having finally tracked it down, does it live up to all that critical praise it had in the Sixties? Regrettably, no it's diverting enough, but the sixties critics hadn't yet seen the post-2001 state-of-the-art effects. Honda's film now seems more of a curiosity.

Admirers of Patrick McGooohan should note Rank's video issue of *All Night Long*, a modern dress version of *Othello* in a jazz environment. McGooohan again demonstrates what a fine actor he is, playing a nervy and fast-talking lingo with a skill that makes you regret that Shakespeare's text has been replaced by a modern language equivalent.



Above: *Fire(r)lands!* The Soprels with Ellen Aim (Diane Lane), from those *Streets of Fire*, now taped for home entertainment, courtesy of CIC.

Fantasy Film Exhibition

BRITISH FILM YEAR



Earlier this year, from April 28th to June 2nd to be precise, the Usher Gallery in Lincoln played unlikely host to the sets and denizens of the world of *The Dark Crystal*. In addition, some of the costumes from such diverse films as *The Company of Wolves*, *The Bounty* and *Indiana Jones* and *The Temple of Doom* found a home in the gallery. The occasion was dubbed a Fantasy Film Exhibition, and was organised by British Film Year, (who arranged the exhibition with the contributors to begin with), in conjunction with the Lincoln Festival.

You hadn't heard about it? Well that's not entirely surprising, as national coverage was less than exhaustive. And regrettably the rather fragile nature of the exhibition means that it won't be travelling any farther than Lincoln, although there have been many thousands of visitors from all over the country.

The exhibition's centrepiece was *The Dark Crystal*, featuring the Gentle Mystics, the Pod People, Evil Shekis, Garthim, the fibre-optically lit castle and the pendulous *Dark Crystal* itself. Add to this a video of *The Making of The Dark Crystal*—to show the animatronics in action—and a recording of the film's soundtrack, and quite a fantastic atmosphere was created. "Initially", says Diane Peacock, "we wanted some kind of tableau or environment for the exhibition, something studio based, which meant something more fantastic than factual, but we really hadn't any idea of what the BFY could arrange. When they told us they had got *The Dark Crystal*, we knew we



Above left: The stars of *The Company of Wolves*, Micha Bergese and companion. Left: The Shekis' castle from *The Dark Crystal*, flanked by (l-r) John Stevenson, the designer of *Crystal*'s creatures; Barbara Griffiths, the Henson Organisation's British representative; Brian Froud, the film's conceptual designer; Lesja Lieber, an associate designer and Duncan Kenworthy, the co-director of Henson Associates. Above right: The life-size Evil Shekis itself. Right: The *Dark Crystal* centrepiece. Far right: "Fangs for coming", from one of the exhibition's most popular attractions.

had a fabulous centrepiece."

In the neighbouring room was a more traditional display of film costumes, something on which the organisers did have strong views. "We wanted to show the historic use of costumes," Peacock explains, "right through to futuristic or fantasy attire. And after we had *The Dark Crystal* sets, we leant more toward the historic." The sources for the costumes were from the major two costumiers for film and television in Britain, Cosprop, and Bermans and Nathans, and they provided costumes from *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Indiana Jones*, *The Shooting Party* and *The Company of Wolves*, among others. The latter also featured some of the props and storyboards from the film, readily offered by Palace Pictures, who also arranged for lectures by the film's costume designer, Elizabeth Waller. Needless to say they were packed.

Why was the fantasy theme chosen? Peacock sums it up neatly. "The fantasy element is the exhibition's strength really. We knew that the ambience we had to display had to have very accessible qualities. Had to be marvellous to look at. Film doesn't always operate on that level, often it's more literary. Fantasy has a very visual impact."

◆
Jim Henson kindly agreed to *The Dark Crystal* exhibition in Lincoln as his contribution to BFY. This was the first time the exhibition had been displayed provincially. Previous exhibitions took place in New York, Los Angeles, London and Paris all in prestigious galleries. The exhibition was organised by his representative in London, Barbara Griffiths in liaison with Henson's New York exhibits designer, Leslee Asch.



BIG SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT

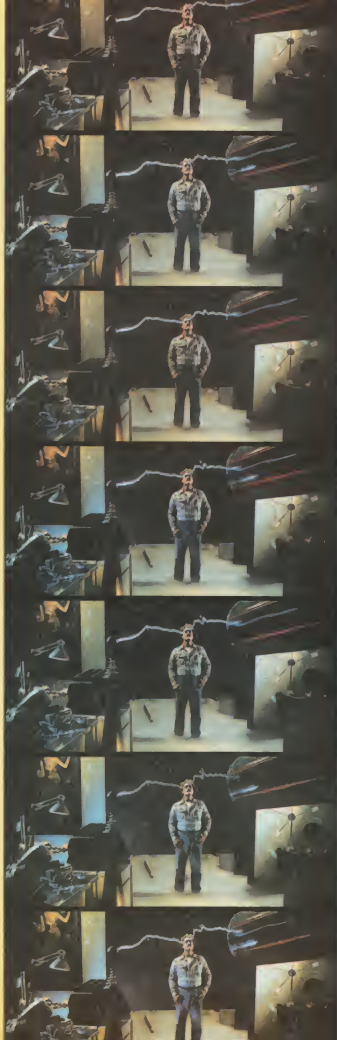
Way back in Starburst 7 Douglas Trumbull outlined his plans for his revolutionary Showscan process. Its European unveiling was to be at Cannes this year, but another new screen process—Omnimax—appeared on the scene, delaying Showscan's debut. Tony Crawley compares the processes and looks at the scope of cinema to come.

"It creates a greatly enhanced illusion of reality over and above any kind of film you've seen. You feel what you're seeing on the screen is happening to you. *Live!* An unbelievably penetrating experience. When we tipped the camera over—people have just rolled out of their seats...!"

That was Douglas Trumbull talking about Showscan in London, March, 1978. Since then we've all been waiting for his screen process—described as 'almost indescribable' by one American film magazine—to reach Europe.

For the last six months, the Euro-launchpad for Showscan was expected to coincide with the Cannes film festival. An ideal situation to display what must be cinema's future.

Well, Trumbull's big event never happened.





Left: An example of the Showscan System – 70mm film – 60 frames per second, in contrast to conventional 35mm film (below) which is projected at 24 frames per second (not actual size). Above: 70mm Omnimax film (enlarged), which runs horizontally from projector to reel.

The reason, like the reason for almost everything else in France, was plainly political. Unveiling Showscan would have taken the shine from President Mitterrand opening the world's largest Omnimax screen – inside a 36-metre diameter silver sphere by the, as yet unfinished, City of Sciences and Industry at La Villette, on the outskirts of Paris.

Postponing Trumbull's lift-off until September in Paris (perhaps) was a French version of the Mexican stand-off. A case of one mammoth new screen process too many. For the same month.

All rather pointless I think as Showscan has the definite edge on Omnimax as far as future feature films are concerned. Why? Well let's look at, albeit briefly, the processes involved.

Suffice to say that since the Lumiere brothers invented cinema in 1895, it's gone through a dizzying number of changes, mainly in screen size, and thereby, production and projection quality. All in the name of extracting more money out of us, the ticket-buyers. We've had 3-D, CinemaScope, VistaVision, Todd-AO, Cinemascope, and have settled for 70mm for big movies of our time. (We've also had Smell-o-Vision, but I don't think I'll get into that).

Cinemascope required three projectors, or more. Disneyland came up with a 360° version which meant nine projectors. It took an Australian, Ron Jones, to come up with a single projector capable of filling a large screen. Well, not just large, huge! And this in turn, led to Imax.



IMAX IMAGERY

Imax is 70mm film, but shot and projected horizontally, at 15 perforations per image. Each image is ten times larger than your average 35mm imagery. Hence the huge screen. Well, not just huge. A whole wall! And the 68% shutter transmits one-third more light than the 50% shutter used in conventional projectors so that picture and focus steadiness are also far above normal standards.

Imax was first seen at Osaka's Expo '70 in Japan. Toronto had one in business the following year. America, rather slowly for the home of leisure parks, got into the act with one at Florida's Circus World in 1974. There are now 28 Imax screens around the globe; 17 in the United States, the most famous being at the Grand Canyon, where in typical US style, you see films of... the Grand Canyon on a screen that is seven stories high.

America even staged an Imax festival recently, at the California Museum of Science and Industry, where George Lucas' THX sound-system adds greatly to the powerful images. The festival ran nine films over 17 days, including: *Living Planet*, *Speed*, *Flyers*, *The Magic Egg* (with computer graphics and electronic score) and, of course, *Grand Canyon: The Hidden Secrets*.

And yes, we even have an Imax screen in Britain, in Bradford. It's been part of the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television since 1983. The



► auditorium at the Museum houses Britain's largest cinema screen, 15.94m high x 19.4m wide, with six track stereo sound. Holland, however, first brought Imax to Europe four years ago. Sure enough, the Dutch were also the first to introduce Europe to Omnimax.

OUTDONE BY OMNIMAX

Omnimax is, as the name implies, Imax magnified. And how? Now the screen is hemispherically curved, allowing films shot with a fish-eye lens to literally open out to 172° vision, and envelop you. Inside La Geode, in Paris, for example, the 370 plus seats are ranged very high, like extremely steep stairs, and the 26-metre diameter screen – 10,700 sq ft of punched aluminium – is the largest Omnimax screen in the world.

Both theatre and screen are built at a 30° angle from the horizontal so that it's like watching a movie being projected inside a billowing parachute.

Omnimax arrived, just three years after Imax, at San Diego's Hall of Science in 1973. There are 24 such screens operational in the world at present, and more being constructed for tomorrow. Half of them are in the United States, including the most visited one at Disney's Epcot Centre in Florida. Japan has five, the latest at Tsukuba Expo '85 (which also made room for both Imax and Showscan screens, but it's Showscan only at Vancouver's Expo '86 next year).

Holland opened Europe's first at the Le Haye planetarium last year – and that's dwarfed by the French screen inside that silver geodesic dome, made up of 6,433 thin, stainless steel spherical triangles. (Oh, you get all the facts here). Hong Kong

has one. So does Taiwan. Impoverished Mexico has four. Britain, it seems, hasn't even heard of Omnimax. So it goes.

FUTURE MAX?

As you will have noticed, Imax and Omnimax screens are mainly in science or space museums, pleasure or theme parks, exhibition centres or even in a gambling Casino – Cesar's Palace in Las Vegas. If Britain gets one, it'd probably be part of Madame Tussaud's or its Planetarium.

It is, then, a sideshow. Not really something for Spielberg, Lucas or Ridley Scott to be concerned with. Or is it? The first French Omnimax film, *L'eau et les hommes* *Water and Men* is a rudimentary documentary. It works well enough and combines enough close-ups, dialogue, even a cowboy to hint at some Omnimax potential beyond that of a teaching tool.

There are several stand-out moments in the film, directed by Pierre Willemenin, but there's nothing one hasn't seen before. Venice, flooded. Indians washing in the Ganges. The Alps. Egyptian deserts. It's all meticulously shot. Okay, you can see the actual lines of the screen when the visuals are too white, the edges of the frame blur a little and the pictures stop right above your head without touching the outer parameters of the screen behind your head. No matter, it's all staggering stuff.

As the Imax festival proves, there are nine other films ready for the towering screens. The Minnesota Science Museum made *The Magic Egg* with 3-D computer's synthetic images. Ronald J. Fricke's *Chronos* will open in September, examining the

concept of time amid a time-lapse panorama of Western civilisation from the Acropolis to Versailles. Haroun Tazieff is shooting an Omnimax view of volcanoes, and the one I'm waiting for, is the NASA special with an Omnimax camera aboard the Shuttle.

Running times are about 40 minutes (*The Magic Egg's* graphics last 15 minutes only), which is long enough for any documentary. But features are out. They'd need millions of Omnimax cinemas, and exhibitors and distributors don't like spending money.

Anyway, Omnimax, let alone Imax, does not go the whole way to perfection. Those staggering visuals are projected at the traditional 24 frames per second. So it pales when compared with the magic of Showscan.

SHOW AND SELL

Showscan is a 70mm film process, photographed and projected at 60 frames per second. "That," says the man who knows it best, inventor Doug Trumbull, "is 2½ times faster, four times brighter and four times larger than standard projection – delivering more than ten times the information of standard 35mm feature films. The image conveys a powerful sense of three-dimensionality, extreme clarity, dynamic motion and brilliant colour."

In short, Showscan is an advance on the way Trumbull shot his special effects for 2001, *Close Encounters*, *Star Trek II*, *Blade Runner*, et al. He always used 70mm, he's now simply speeding it up. "I felt that one of the things never tried was higher frame rates. I had some suspicion that it might prove to be interesting. We did some tests. Sure enough, it is

very interesting.

"Why? Because as extensive psychological and physiological testing has demonstrated, Showscan's 60 frames per second approximates the speed at which the eye perceives reality. It's like having something happen to you. It's not something you can just watch. It's like a huge hologram. A real experience. It makes everything on the screen come alive - animation, as well."

"(The screens are) semi-curved, not as deeply curved as the Cinerama screens were. I didn't think that was a very good design, in that the curvature was curved at a point of about the fourth row. The rest of the theatre had a lousy view. We've tried to make the curvature much more appropriate for the whole audience, by simply making the screen bigger, anywhere from 60 to 150 ft wide. Our smallest screens, restricted only by the physical size of the theatres, are about as big as the biggest Cinerama screens ever were."

With the Cannes debut thwarted by the arrival of Omnimax in Paris, Showscan's new Euro-launch looks like being staged in Paris, sometime in September. And I know of at least two French combines already fighting over the franchise to run the Paris home of future Showscan films. For a good reason. Showscan is definitely to be utilised for features, not just documentaries.

Three films have been made - featurettes directed by Trumbull. Christopher Lee stars in the first, *Neo Magic* - an apt sub-title for Showscan. Along with *Big Ball* and the Munich-shot *Let's Go*, Lee's film has packed them in at the first four Showscan theatres in America. These were adjuncts to a string of pizza parlours... which doesn't appear to say much about Trumbull's process and/or Hollywood interest in it.

"I've been trying for nine years to get Showscan launched in this industry," explains Trumbull. "I think I've just as much credibility, technically, as you can get. I've shown it to every major studio - and they can't handle it. Hollywood's in a technological stalemate. The studios are run by people's agents, attorneys, who don't know anything about the technology of motion pictures."

"When the studios owned the cinemas, they tried to improve upon each other's product by researching better sound and better picture quality, whatever they could do to improve a film, technically. But that was in the forties and the fifties. That's all ended. A lot of people invested time and money into improving sound and the best anybody has been able to do so far is Dolby - a very small step."

Trumbull, needless to say, has leapt beyond that. Showscan has its own superior sound-system. Digital sound on laser-disc. However, for the moment, Hollywood views the new process as a side-show. And with the amount of film it uses, more expensive than 3-D. So, no go.

Yet not to paint too bleak a picture, there are some interesting (and substantiated, which is more important) developments in the pipeline, which give hope. Henry Platt (who runs the Platt cinema chain) is more interested in Showscan in his theatres, than seeing it arrive in his neighbourhood as a rival side-show. Platt has joined Trumbull's Showscan Film Corporation, and is building 30 Showscan cinemas in the next few months; 20 in America, ten more in global hot spots. All this is in time for the first Showscan feature, which is now in preparation. And "several eminent filmmakers" are discussing the chance to direct it.

Douglas Trumbull says he doesn't have to be the one making the first, second or any features. It's an open house, well for any director who has viewed and

values his system. And the big news as far as fantasy fans are concerned is that Lucas and Spielberg most certainly have... and do.

The Showscan Film Corporation, which is a complete studio entity, in terms of equipment and staff will provide the "ultimate support system" and invites directors to come in and experiment over the next six months. They'll need to, as Trumbull feels, "a direc-



tor will have to become acclimatised to what the possibilities are."

The first outsider directing in Showscan is the Canadian filmmaker Philip Borsoos. He's shooting the special short to be screened at the Vancouver Expo next year.

Showscan films will certainly cost more, about 10 percent higher than Hollywood norms. But for a very simple reason. Shooting 60 frames per second means they use more raw film stock. "But producers are not getting what they pay for now," says Trumbull.

"Filmmaking is currently very expensive, but doesn't fully utilise the arts or locations or effects. Showscan will offer ten times as much for the money."

So, the first Showscan feature will cost around \$20 million. Not that high, when compared with Coppola spending \$48 million on *The Cotton Club*. And yes, the film will have special effects galore - via Trumbull's other company, Entertainment Effects Group, in which he's partnered with his veteran associates Richard Edlund and Richard Yurich. "Showscan," they agree, "is designed to be compatible with large screen effects." And they know what they are. They handled *Star Wars*, *Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*, *Polltex*, *Ghostbusters* and 2010.

As well as costing more, Showscan features will lose out on the ancillary profits of sales to television or cassettes. "As we're working in 70 mm, I really need a video system capable of 4,000 lines - many, many more times the definition that is even currently being thought about with high-definition TV of 1,200 lines. Television won't be able to handle that amount of information in the next ten or 15 years, until a huge revolution of information capacity."

Yet the most important query about Showscan comes down to how much of it can we cope with? The first three movies have been half-hour efforts. When he last spoke with *Starburst*, Douglas Trumbull said he was planning his first hour-long movie. "We're experimenting with this whole thing of length," admits Trumbull. "We don't know how much of it people can take before they're completely worn out. Your whole perception of time is changed when seeing these films. They seem much longer than they really are because there's so much more information in them. Ten times as much per minute, or per second, than in 35mm movies." ◆



Opposite page: "Welcome to the Pleasure Dome". Well, strictly speaking, *La Gode*, the 36 metre diameter sphere which houses the Omnimax theatre, at La Villette, Paris. Top: "Here's looking at you" through the amazing Imax camera. Above: "Fasten your seat belts please!" The Imax screen at Bradford's Photographic Museum teaches audiences how To Fly.

COMPUTER CRIMINALS

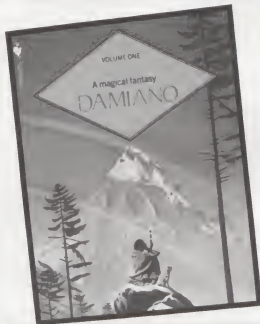
Do your eyes glaze over at the mention of punched cards, tape and teletypes? Wait till you read the ten stories in *Computer Crimes and Capers*. Joe Gores' 'Darl I Luv You' is all about teletypes. The 'punchline' being that on the other end is not a person but...a computer. What a surprise for anyone who didn't cheat by reading the anthology's title! Stan Dyer's 'An End of Spinach' is *War Games* in microcosm, a weak joke with kids using Daddy's terminal, which just happens to control American agriculture, to phase out their least favourite vegetable. Don't expect a plot.

'Computers Don't Argue' by Gordon Dickson is at least a minor classic, courageously reprinted here for the umpteenth time. Black humour abounds as computer errors escalate and the chap who gets an unwanted copy of *Kidnapped* from his (computerized) book club ends up in the death cell, charged with kidnapping by (computerized) police...Dickson doesn't go into detail about software, but simply records its appalling effects, so the story holds up after twenty years - as does Paul Anderson's 1953 story, 'Sam Hall', perhaps the first SF about the power of hackers in a totally computerized society. Sam Hall is a myth but gets sneaked into data stores as a real man, a murderer of fascist police, and eventually a focus for revolution in futuristic America.

Edward Wellen contributes two mildly amusing yarns, one involving much the same swindle as Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842). Typically for this book, Wellen's hackers break effortlessly into the central US 'war-room program' by simply guessing the password. Edward D. Hoch's feeble whodunnit cheats, by keeping vital (and implausible) information from the reader: and he has software fraud experts studying not programs but 'computer wiring diagrams'. J.T. McIntosh bases his piece on the daft notion of an Intelligent computer which issues orders and won't (by design) explain them. Because the information on which the orders are based is secret, you see, not even the chief of Intelligence is allowed to check it. The pleasant Silverberg story isn't really about computers; and an okay Asimov one ('All the Troubles of the World') is familiar from Asimov's own collections.

David Langford

Fantasy BOOKSHELF



SKILFUL SORCERY

Damiano carries all the outward danger-signs of a second-rate fantasy. It's Volume 1 of yet another trilogy, with the usual rave recommendations from Anne McCaffrey and Andre Norton (who these days seem to spend more time plugging others' books than writing their own). But instead of swordsmen in fur loincloths on the cover, there's a fine Alpine scene from Britain's very own Jim Burns; and instead of routine fantasy questing inside we get a well written mix of history and magic.

Damiano Delstrego is a young alchemist of an altered, but very evocative Renaissance Italy. His life is soaked in magic: the angel Raphael drops by from time to time to give him lute lessons, while his talkative dog Macchiata is an amusing character in her own right. The word 'charming' springs to mind, and once or twice it looks as though MacAvoy is on the verge of becoming twee. This never quite happens, though, because the author takes risks and does the unexpected.

When his little town Partestrada gets caught in war between the city-states, Damiano hopelessly searches for a way to keep the place peaceful and unspoilt. Soon his naive sweet nature is worn down. His bloody success in using his talents in the war appal him. The girl he loves retires to a nunnery. Villains have their own reasonable viewpoint and can grow into friends; the good folk of Partestrada can at times be a pretty rotten bunch. Damiano bargains with an upmarket witch and with the Devil, accepting damnation if he can achieve peace.

In this book, and its sequel *Damiano's Lute*, there are events to jolt anyone expecting a safe, predictable fantasy. There are lovable characters whom you just know will survive to the happy ending of the trilogy; but some of them die. Nor is it usual for a fantasy hero, after a confused and ambiguous victory, to imitate Prospero - breaking his staff, drowning his book and leaving his magic behind, to vanish into the woods. This just isn't cricket: what would have happened to Middle Earth if Gandalf retired to draw his pension at the end of book one?

I like a story to surprise me, and R.A. MacAvoy has certainly achieved this. With charm.

David Langford

EXTRA(ORDINARY) FICTION

Short stories are always a boon for the busy person; they are quickly read and equally quickly forgotten. Joanna Russ's collection of SF short stories, *Extra(ordinary) People*, however, cannot be so easily dismissed. Far from forgettable, these fictions have a wonderfully haunting quality. Unlike *The Female Man*, which, although brilliant, is a notoriously difficult novel, *Extra(ordinary) People* is very readable.

The five stories are linked together in the form of a history lesson to a child of the future, but they offer more than just tales of strange and exotic historical happenings. They offer an exposé of the human psychology involved in gender and power relationships, as well as questioning the nature of science fiction itself.

"Souls", the opening story in the collection won the 1983 Hugo Award, and it is quite easy to see why. Set in medieval times, it is the story of the Abbess Radequinde who is extraordinary in the extreme. It is told from her errand-boy's point of view, as he watches and hears the Abbess defend her community against a Viking invasion. Her only apparent weapon is her omniscience and charismatic physical presence.

The second tale is set in the nineteenth century aboard a clipper bound for America. The tale is of a young girl and her guardian; the guardian's sexuality has an elusive quality which never fails to intrigue the reader or the other passengers for that matter. The other stories, set in our present, our future and a feudal past are equally thought provoking. As always with Russ, there is an indefinable sexuality about her characters which makes us think and think again about the way we automatically categorise people. The language and narrative approach she employs for each story perfectly fit the period in which they are set, once again revealing Russ's stylistic versatility. Yet the humour throughout is contemporary and is well used to satirise and delight.

Strong characterisation, rigorously imaginative storylines and well crafted writing are always present in Joanna Russ's work, and of the first four of the Women's Press SF Series, I enjoyed *Extra(ordinary) People* the most.

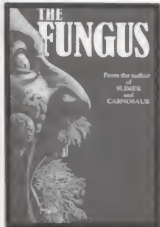
The Wanderground, by Sally Miller Gearhart, began for me, as some-

thing of a trial. Being a 1985 cynic, as many of us are, I found the earthmother-and-sisterhood atmosphere too wholesome to be convincing, but as the story unfolded I began to enjoy it more and more. The Earth itself has rebelled against the power of patriarchy, all the strong women have taken to the hills and the men are left in their Orwellian city to fend for themselves. The 'remembering' descriptions of the city are highly evocative, and the change in tone, atmosphere and general rhythm of the writing suitably contrasts with the soft language of the *Wanderground*. Sally Miller Gearhart is clearly an expert on forms of communication, and they are fully explored in this book. *The Wanderground* is a female Utopian vision and is certainly a seductive one in the face of Gearhart's view of male city life which, unfortunately, is rather too close to the truth for comfort.

Alison Bird

FEARSOME FUNGUS

Creeping terror from the compost heap! A nightmare novel if ever there was one, *The Fungus* is about an horrific outbreak of "green death" in London which ultimately leads to a nationwide attack of killer mushroom people.



Scientists have succeeded in turning a species of common forest fungus into a protein-filled food substance, but in doing so have also created a monster which that proves to be an infectious menace to mankind. Unleashed from a London laboratory, a terrible plague of plant life spreads quickly across the country. The army is called in and the capital is made a no-go area. Into this fungus-filled city three unlikely characters are sent, on a military mission to find the original scientific notes of the

organism's development in the hope an antidote can be created to combat the compost.

If you're green about mycology (the study of moulds, mushrooms and toadstools) don't worry; after reading *The Fungus* you'll be able to take a degree in the subject! Author Harry Adam Knight has certainly done his homework on the many different species of fungi, which gives the reader some biological background into the behaviour of the organisms.

The Fungus is also full of stomach-turning horror and titillating sex, both written in equally explicit detail. Well balanced with a healthy amount of dry humour (one chapter, set in a sparsely populated British cinema, mentions that the B-feature short is about the typically absurd subject of yaks!), it is highly enjoyable exploitation reading.

Knight has surpassed himself in gross prose in this, his third and best novel, following the popular *Slimer* and *Carnosaur*. With *The Fungus* under his belt (!) the writer must now surely rank alongside James Herbert and Guy N. Smith as one of Britain's top horror merchants (he has even been described as "The new Stephen King" by a certain well-respected fantasy film magazine).

Roger Birchall

COMPUTER COMIC

It was inevitable, I suppose. Even the low-art world of comic books has succumbed to high technology. America's First Comics have come up with the world's first computer-produced comic: *Shatter*. However, before you start seeing visions of some insidious software replicating endless variations on Spider-Man vs Doc Doom, I should point out that there are two very capable humans behind this project, artist Michael Saenz and writer Peter B. Gillis.

The only computerised aspect to the writing of the strip is the Apple III which Gillis uses to type up his scripts. The artwork is the unique feature of this comic: Michael Saenz has produced all the graphics for the book on an Apple Macintosh computer, utilising their MacPaint software. He then colours the black and white print out in a more traditional way, although Saenz, an experienced airbrush artist, brings an unusual texture to the colours. It's a cross between hard graffiti and soft pastel.

The artwork is simply a combina-

tion of dots and straight lines. At its best it portrays human faces with the grainy feel of a newspaper photograph, and some of the futuristic cityscapes take on a strange reality which could not be achieved with a traditional ink line. Less successful though is the sense of perspective in some scenes, many of the figures appear curiously two-dimensional. Also the inability to produce curves can make the attempts at conveying fluid movement rather stilted.

The story (another futuristic cop à la *Blade Runner*) has some nice touches - freelance policemen must bid for the rights to investigate



crimes via their home computers - but it fails to achieve a convincing portrait of a world dominated by technology.

Shatter has attracted a great deal of media attention in the States, with articles in such magazines as *Harpers* and *Science Digest*. This has resulted in unexpectedly strong sales (the first *Shatter Special* went to a second print run within weeks of publication) and a regular comic is set to debut later this year.

Dick Hansom

Bookshelf Credits:

The Fungus - by Harry Adam Knight (Star 220pp £1.95pb).

Shatter (published by First Comics - £1.25). Available at comic specialists.

Computer Crimes and Capers - Ed. Isaac Asimov, Martin Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh (Viking 23pp £10.95).

Damiano - by R. A. MacAvoy (Bantam/Corgi 243pp £1.95).

The Wanderground - by Sally Miller Gearhart (The Women's Press, £1.95).

Extra (ordinary) People - by Joanna Russ (The Women's Press, 160pp, £1.95).

Comics, and more importantly comic art, is one of the most collectible aspects of the fantasy genre. In fact, throughout its very short history comic book popularity has resulted in many of its characters being transferred to the cinema screen. The highly successful serials of the forties and fifties depended to a great extent on the adventures of famous superheroes like *Batman* and *Superman*. When television finally entered the entertainment stakes and competed for cinema audiences, it gave legendary figures such as *Wonderwoman* and the *Incredible Hulk* the opportunity to appear in long-running TV series.

But television was at the same time, creating a few small screen heroes of its own, and a reverse trend began — comic book spin-offs from highly successful TV programmes. Here in Britain, TV tie-in comics started in the late fifties and early sixties, although, comics such as *Film Fun* had brought Hollywood stars to the illustrated page as early as 1920, by the mid-sixties comic strips originating from television concerned mostly children's series. One very popular magazine was Gerry Anderson's *TV 21* featuring adventures and

promotions from his puppet shows, *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds* and many more. Another long-running children's paper was *TV Comic*. This contained an ever-changing multitude of famous TV characters, from *The Avengers* and *Dr. Who* to *Sexton Blake* and *Orlando*. Its only rival was a more juvenile publication called *TV Land*. This featured younger children's shows such as *Ivor the Engine*, *The Pingwings*, *Ollie Beak*, *Larry the Lamb* and *Noggin the Nog*. By the end of the decade *TV Comic*'s opposition included *Countdown*, *TV Tornado*, *TV Action* and *Look-In*. Among the television programmes featured in their brightly coloured pages were *The Man from Uncle*, *Hawaii 5-0*, *The Persuaders*, *UFO*, *Bonanza*, *The Invaders*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and of course,

TV ZONE

by Richard Holliss

Batman and Superman.

In America the TV/comic tie-in was a much bigger concern. The Western Publishing and Lithographing Company, together with KK Publications in New York and the Golden Press, produced a long-running series of comic books aimed at a wide variety of age groups. Now sadly neglected by the more serious comic collector, *Gold Key* comics, as they were called, were for a time the most widely read and distributed magazines in the United States. Along with *DC Comics* and *Charlton*, they were considered by parents as the only safe reading for children, adhering to strict moral codes.

For the ardent TV buff however, their appeal and sales success probably lies in the reasonably good artwork and full colour covers, most of which used actual photographs from the relevant TV series. In truth, a lot of these ideas originated with *Dell Comics* in the early fifties. Their film tie-ins were enormously successful as well as highly collectible. The most sought-after being the Walt Disney *Uncle Scrooge* titles with artwork by Carl Barks.

Although *Gold Key* originated a lot of material, on the TV side, the long-running series *My Favourite Martian* encouraged nine issues of a *Gold Key* tie-in between 1964 and 1966. Each issue with the exception of No. 3, carried colour photographs from the series. Number One followed the plot line of the first episode very closely, but later issues contained all new material. In some cases these new stories were far more exciting than their TV counterparts.

HANNA-BARBERA'S TV TIMES

The popularity of Hanna-Barbera's characters, *Mr and Mrs J. Evil Scientist* (1963), a kind of *Addams Family* rip-off, prompted *Gold Key* to introduce their own series of spooky family stories. Called *The Little Monsters*, it ran from 1964 to 1978 and was marketed in such a way that it could easily have been from a TV series. *Star Trek* had an even more successful life. Issue one appeared in *Gold Key* October 1967, while issue 61, which contained a great deal of reprint material, completed the run in April 1979.

Among the old *Kid* comic books that didn't survive were *The Time Tunnel* (two issues), *The Invaders* (four issues), *The Avengers* (one issue), *Land of the Giants* (five issues), *The Girl from Uncle* (five issues), *Frankenstein Jr* and *The Impossibles* (one issue), and *Daktari* (four issues). In some cases the television series that gave them life didn't last very long either. Exceptions were *The Flintstones* (60 issues) before the rights were sold to *Charlton* and then *Marvel comics*, and *The Jetsons* (36 issues), before *Charlton* picked up the licence in 1970.

For some already well established comic series like *Tarzan of the Apes*, *Gold Key* brought out the occasional TV tie-in. These featured cover photographs from the Ron Ely TV series. The entire run of *The Man from Uncle* comic (22 issues) featured TV stills on the covers. Towards the end of the seventies *Gold Key* comics finally folded. It had become apparent that the interest in TV adaptations was waning. Blockbuster cinema films were enticing the fantasy buff in to a whole new area of marketing and collecting. TV was having



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TV ACTION



More Who. in TV Action, drawn by Gerry Haylock.

a hard time competing. TV comics were being outdone by video machines and the numerous fantasy film magazines that carried articles on "all you need to know about small screen entertainment but were afraid to ask." What a shame that as comics move from strength to strength, this is one area of collecting that is sadly forgotten: the TV/Comic tie-in.

A SAD DAY AT DISNEY

Later this year sees the release of the latest Walt Disney feature length animated film, *The Black Cauldron*, in 70mm and full stereophonic sound. Years in the making it was passing through the studio while top Disney animator Wolfgang Reitherman was there, working on numerous other projects. At the end of May, *Disney-time* on BBC television showed a sequence from *Cauldron* and I was reminded of my interview with Wolfgang Reitherman back at the time of *The Fox and the Hound*. (Starburst 42). When I asked Reitherman if he intended to return and help out on *The Black Cauldron*, or take a well-deserved retirement, he replied "I don't know yet. I should go back around the first of the year, but you know, there is something to be said for being free. I've had a tremendous loyalty to that Studio, so unless it's something really unusual, I don't think that I shall be going back." How sad, that now he won't even see the long-awaited release of *The Black Cauldron*. He died of injuries from a car accident on May the 22nd. At the age of 75, he was a veteran of the animation industry and will be missed by all who worked with him. Thank goodness that his marvellous artistry and spectacular film-making will live on for a whole new generation of moviegoers.

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Some three years after it was made, *The Return of Captain Invincible* has finally flown in from Australia and landed in London's smallest public cinema, the Minema, which is where I caught up with it recently and where I experienced a new form of cinema-going torture thanks to a patron who insisted on listening to his Walkman throughout the performance. (For a moment I thought I was picking up Radio 1 on my fillings.)

I wish I could say the wait for *Captain Invincible* had been worth it, but I'm afraid I was disappointed. Alan Arkin is good as the Captain, and Christopher Lee gives one of the liveliest performances of his career, but the film as a whole doesn't come off. The humour is unfocused – as if the script writer wasn't sure what he was supposed to be sending up – and the direction occasionally borders on the amateurish (at times the film reminded me of those painfully embarrassing Australian TV comedy shows I used to watch as a kid).

Typical of what's wrong with the movie is the casting of Australian actress Kate Fitzpatrick as the Captain's female companion. To say that Ms Fitzpatrick is unsuited for the part is putting it too mildly, so I'll come right out and say that she looks like the sort of woman (common in Australia) who starts each day by strangling a Great White Shark to death with her bare hands. Her *forte* as an actress is definitely not comedy and it was rather cruel of the director, Philippe Mora, to pair her with a consummate comedy actor like Arkin.

Still, *The Return of Captain Invincible* is more fun to watch than Britain's *Morons from Outer Space* (even *The Sound of Music* would be more fun to watch than that turkey).

One Australian movie that I hope will live up to expectations is *Mad Max 3* (now called, for some inexplicable reason, *Beyond Thunderdome*). I've been hearing some tantalising things about it, including the following from ex-*Starburst* contributor John Baxter who is now back in Australia: "I went out on the set of *Mad Max 3* one night just before the end of shooting. It looked spectacular. There's a quarry out by the State Brickworks on the edge of Sydney and the unit had adapted part of this into a small crater to be the Bartentown of the film. The night I was there Mel Gibson was doing a fight scene with a Biker champion, inside a thing like a huge bird-cage 30 or 40 feet high, hanging from trapezes. The crowd was festooned all over the outside of the cage, chanting 'Two men enter, one man leaves!'

It's only a MOVIE

A Column by John Brosnan



Tina Turner considers her future in *Beyond Thunderdome* – the maddest *Max* of all?

"They'd gone to a lot of trouble to get the details of Bartentown right. For example, a brothel was made up of panel vans nosed into a ruin; the brothel's business was done in the back of the vans, a nice realistic touch. (I wouldn't know about such things, John.)

"Out on the sandhills around Sydney they built a pit fitted with a lift and a rubber membrane so that some sand monster could swallow a horse. And apparently Angry Anderson, the short, bald very ugly lead singer of Rose Tattoo, is the comic relief, a heavy for whom everything goes wrong. A grip I met out on location for a crummy thriller called *Fair Game* chuckled reminiscently about all this as he jacked some more shells into the MALS shotgun when three crazed kangaroo shooters were chasing a girl around the bush. Never

a dull moment in the old Australian film industry."

As to the plot of *Mad Max 3/Road Warrior 2/Beyond Thunderdome 1*, co-writer and co-producer Terry Hayes has provided a few clues. "It begins where the last one left off. *Max* has been worked over by a gang of marauders and left in the desert to die. A gound member of the 'Crack in the Earth' wild tribe finds him and takes him home. *Max* finally leaves with some of the children and crosses the desert again, but as far as the ending is concerned everyone will have to pay their dollar or whatever to know.

"It's a much more generous film. I think, than the second one. At the beginning of the second, *Max* was a closet human being. At the end he had sort of come out of the closet and recognised that he could be touched

by human emotion. This film, number 3, is the resurrection of him as a man. He admits to himself that he's capable of caring again. The trick has been to integrate this with the elements that have worked in the other two *Max* movies. It's in the style of the other two with car action and chases in it. It would be silly to divorce it totally from that audience. But it's a much more broadly based picture. Sort of *Apocalypse Now* meets *The Wizard of Oz*..."

Hmmm, I'm not sure I like the sound of that last bit but we shall have to wait until the end of the year to find out if *Max* sings 'Over the Rainbow'...

UNFAIR SLATING

The movie that's given me the most pleasure recently is John Landis's comedy-thriller *Into the Night* and I can't understand why most of the critics have been antagonistic towards it. It's been called everything from 'so-so' to 'abysmal'. Even one of my illustrious fellow critics on this magazine (Alan Jones, if you must know) said rude things about it, but as far as I'm concerned it's an excellent film and why I seem to be in the minority with this opinion is a mystery to match that of the *Marie Celeste*...

Some of the fun in *Into the Night* is provided by trying to spot the various directors, like David Cronenberg, Don Siegel, Paul Bartel and Paul Mazursky, who have cameo roles (Mazursky in particular is good as a sleazy TV director). Landis' old *Schlock* colleague Rick Baker also has a cameo (as a drug pusher) while Landis has given himself the juicy role of an Iranian hit-man (he gives himself a spectacular death scene too).

But one of the main attractions of the movie, for me, is Michelle Pfeiffer who plays Diana, the mystery woman who ensnares Jeff Goldblum (also very good) in a murky plot involving emeralds, mayhem and murder (even a dog and two parrots are among the large number of corpses that accumulate by the end of the film). I thought she was just an exceptionally pretty face in *Grease 2*; my estimation of her talent went up several notches when I saw her in *Scarface*, but with *Into the Night* she proves she is one hell of an actress.

So impressed am I by her I may even go and see her in *Ladyhawke*, even though I have been warned by colleagues that this movie has more in common with turkeys than hawks. The things I do for beautiful women...



The Filing Cabinet of DR. SALLY GARY

Before getting down to the real business of the *Data Bank* column, I'd like to pass on a request I received from TV documentary-maker Spike Knowles, who's trying to track down copies of Tod Browning's *Freaks* and the 1978 Mia Farrow picture *Full Circle*. Spike told me he needs to see *Freaks* for a documentary he's making on real-life freaks. If anyone out there can loan him copies of either of these films, perhaps they could drop him a line at 64 Meyrick Avenue, Luton LU1 5JR.

CORRECTION TIME

Eamonn Hogan dropped me a line from Tinnock, on the Emerald Isle, to point out a goof in SB79's *Data Bank*. The picture we printed from *The Final Programme* (1974) was captioned as showing Hugh Griffith, while Eamonn feels sure that is actually showed Milo O'Shea.

Okay, confession time: I haven't seen *The Final Programme*, and I didn't caption the still. So while I agree that it does look like Milo O'Shea, I have to say that the still released by MGM-EMI was captioned by the film company as Hugh Griffith. And unless anyone can tell me otherwise for sure, for sure, I'm sticking with Griffith.

A few more corrections: Barbara Carrera was also in *Puzzle of a Downfall Child* (1970), *The Master Gunfighter* (1975), *When Time Ran Out* (1981) and is currently in *Wild Geese 2* (1985). Richard Keil also appeared in *The Mean Machine* (1974), *Inside Out* (1977) and *The Cannonball Run 2* (1984).

Meanwhile, Gloria Holden's credits also include: *Wife vs Secretary* (1936), *Hawaii Calls* (1938), *Dodge City* (1939), *This Thing Cal-*



The real-life cast of Tod Browning's controversial *Freaks*.

led Love (1941), *Miss Annie Rodney* (1942), *Strange Holiday* (1945), *Adventures of Rusty* (1945), *Hit the Hay* (1946), *The Hucksters* (1947), *Killer McCoy* (1948), *A Kiss for Corliss* (1949)... but who cares? Not much fantasy there.

Among his credits dear old Dave Prowse also proudly includes: *Casino Royale* (1968), *Hammerhead* (1968), *Up Pompeii* (1972), *Up the Chastity Belt* (1973), *Sweet Suzy* (1973), *White Cargo* (1974), *Gulliver's Travels* (1977), *The People that Time Forgot* (1977), and *Jabberwocky* (1978).

Thanks to Neil Roberts, Glyn Lewis, N. Gale, Philip Martyn, and Mick Slatter for the info.

CAROLINE!

"Please could you give me a filmography of my favourite fantasy lady, Caroline Munro, and tell me in which issues of *Starburst* she has been featured and what she is doing, film-wise, at the

moment?" writes Adrian Hudson of Handsworth, Sheffield.

Y'know, Ade, on all the occasions that *Starburst's* interviewed, profiled and printed pictures of La Munro, we've never yet given you a run-down of her credits. So... here goes: *Casino Royale* (1966), *G. G. Passion* (1966), *Where's Jack?* (1969), *A Talent for Loving* (1969), *The Abominable Dr Phibes* (1971), *Dr Phibes Rises Again* (1972), *Dracula AD72* (1972), *Capt Kronos - Vampire Hunter* (1973), *Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1974), *The Devil Watching Her* (1975), *At the Earth's Core* (1976), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), *Starcrash* (1978), *Maniac* (1981), *The Last Horror Film* (1983), and to be released, *April Fool's Day* (1985) and *Don't Open Till Christmas* (1985). TV: *New Avengers* ("Angels of Death", 1977), 3-2-1 (1983-84).

Caroline was interviewed in *Starburst 24* and 56. Okay?

CARPENTER ON TV

John Herbert was sitting at home, leafing through his copy of Stephen King's *Danse Macabre* when he came across the title of a John Carpenter movie he'd never heard of: *Someone's Watching Me* (1978) and wrote to me to ask about it. John must be a newcomer to *Starburst*. I flicked back to my copy of *Starburst 21* and copied down the credits of the film:

Written and directed by John Carpenter for Warner/NBCTV. Starring Lauren Hutton, Adrienne Barbeau, Charles Cyphers, Granger Hines. Screened on BBC1, October 8 1979 and repeated at least once in 1983. I don't think it's available on video. I remember I liked the movie a lot when I first saw it. But when I caught it on its rerun, I was disappointed. Basically the story is that Lauren Hutton is convinced she's being watched by a peeping Tom in the apartment across the

street from hers. No one believes her and Hutton has to do her best to stay out of the maniac's clutches. Frankly, you're not missing much!

LALLA WHO?

Jon Coley of Penrhyndeudraeth (right?), N. Wales was upset that Lalla Ward was left off the *Vampire Circus* credits I gave in *Starburst 78*. Lalla, you'll remember, played Helga the Gypsy Vampire in that masterpiece a few years before she went on to find fame and fortune as the Time Lord's assistant in *Doctor Who*.

Jon feels the disservice I did Miss Ward could be redressed if I include a pic of the lady as she appeared in the movie in this column. Okay, it's done. Jon goes on to say: "If I was a smart alec I'd ask you to impart whatever information you have on two other genre pieces featuring Lalla: The BBC Ghost Story for Christmas, *The Ash Tree* (1975), from the M.R. James story, and a segment for the Leap in the Dark called *The Fetch* (1977). I'd also ask for a picture from either of these. But I know these requests

are difficult if not impossible. So I won't ask!"

Thanks Jon, you had me worried there for a moment.

QUICKIES

A couple of quickies from Raymond Ford, Hackney, London. Ray's looking for a filmography for fantasy cheapie producer Jack Harris: *The Blob* (1958), *The 4-D Man* (1959), *Dinosaur* (1960), *Equinox* (1971), *Dark Star* (1972), *Beware the Blob* (1972), *The Legend of Hillbilly John* (1973), *Eyes of Laura Mars* (1978). I think I've missed a couple, but I know I'll be put right by our ever-vigilant readers. Ray also wanted to know whether Gunnar Hansen, who found fame as the notorious Leatherface in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in 1974, ever made another movie. All I could find was a credit for a low-budget black magic flick, *Demon Lover* (1976). I don't know anything about the movie, but it sounds like a porno picture to me. Anyone have anything to add?

In the meantime, that's about it for this time around. If you have any questions you



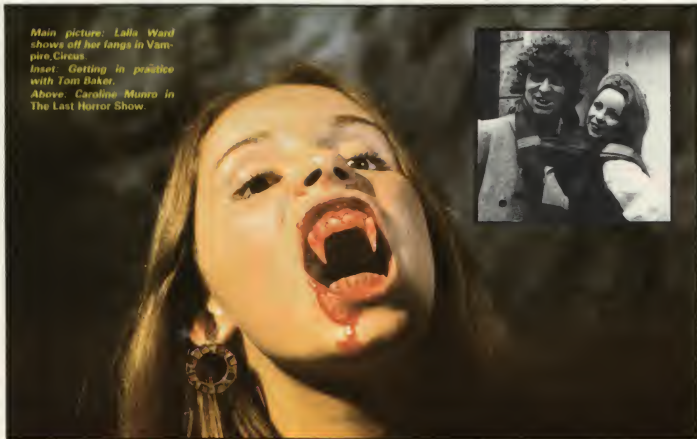
want to ask, anything that's been driving you nuts for weeks, any obscure facts you can't quite put your finger on, why not drop me a line to tell me about it. That's what I'm here for.

Send all your fantasy related trivia questions to: **Starburst Data Bank, Starburst Magazine, Marvel Comics Ltd, 23 Redan Place, London W2 4SA.**

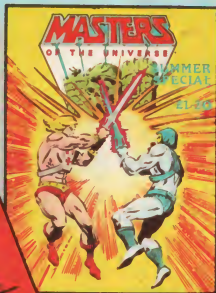
Main picture: Lalla Ward shows off her fangs in *Vampire Circus*.

Inset: Getting in practice with Tom Baker.

Above: Caroline Munro in *The Last Horror Show*.



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